

# British Regulars in Virginia, 1677-82

By Lee Offen

In late September 1676, the ship *Rebecca* arrived in London with dispatches from the Vice Governor of Virginia, Sir William Berkeley, with word of a rebellion by the colonists. The Governor, Thomas Lord Culpepper, had been the governor for life since 1675 but had not yet even seen the colony.

Acting with uncharacteristic speed, by 1 October King Charles II had “resolved to send thither forthwith a thousand men to quell these mutineers.” For the time, this was a major expedition incurring considerable cost for a government that was always short of money. The speed with which this decision was made, is second only to the speed with which the expedition was organized and sent.

Within four more days, commissions for five foot companies, one each from existing standing regiments, were signed, and Jeffreys’ Regiment of Foot came into being. The Regiment was staffed as follows:

<b>Regiment</b>	<b>Company Commander</b>	<b>LT</b>	<b>2LT</b>	<b>Ensign</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Foot Guards	COL Jeffreys	Henry Taylor	Edward Rous	William Matthews
2 <sup>nd</sup> Foot Guards	MAJ John Mutlowe	John Tongue	Thomas Truotbeck	Thomas Seymour
1 <sup>st</sup> Foot Guards	CPT Edward Picts	John Webb	John Hetley? (Thomas Moile?)	Edward Saville
Duke of York’s	CPT Charles Middleton	Francis Hobbin? (Francis Hellin?)	John Thorne	John Jeffreys
Holland Regt.	CPT William Meoles	Walter Morgan	Thomas Sanders	George Ange

Adjutant CPT William Morris  
 Quartermaster and Marshal LT John Tongue  
 Churgeon Jonathan Grove  
 Chaplain Paul Williams  
 James Archer, Engineer  
 Thomas Stavely, Commissary of Stores and Master Gunner  
 four Gunners

one Gunsmith

Additional officers who followed or accompanied the Regiment:

Captain Ralph Delaval

Lieutenant Morgan

Lieutenant Collier

Ensign Grymes

Ensign Francis Wheeler

Each of the five companies had 200 soldiers assigned including six Sergeants, three Corporals and one drummer. The 1st Guards sent 158 soldiers, the 2nd Guards sent 84 soldiers, the Duke of York's sent 59 soldiers, and the Holland Regiment sent 49 soldiers. The non-regimented companies at Portsmouth, Plymouth, Tower of London, Gravesend, Tilbury, Hull, Sheerness and Windsor provided a total of 150 soldiers. A total of 500 men were newly raised and kept in the Tower of London until embarkation to prevent desertion. The companies were armed with the then typical ratio of 2 to 1 of musket to pike, with the possible exception of the Duke of York's Regiment which was a musket only equipped regiment. The First Guards companies wore red coats with blue facings, The Second Guards company wore red coats with green facings, the Admirals Regiment company wore gold coats with red facings and the Holland Regiment company wore red coats with "flesh" colored facings. Unusually, it is very likely that the companies wore the uniforms of their parent regiments. Equally unusually, the colors carried by the regiment reflected the origins of the companies in the regiment:

**Nov 1676 "Warrant to Ralph Montague, Master of the King's Great Wardrobe. To prepare two colours for each of the five companies of the King's foot guards, now sending upon an expedition to Virginia, viz., for Captain Herbert Jeffreys' company, two colours, with a crowned lion passant upon the crown; for Captain Edward Picks' company two colours, with the Royal oak crowned; for Captain John Mutlowe's company two colours, the ground blue with a red cross in a white field; for Captain Charles Middleton's company two colours, white waved with lemon, equally mixed with the red cross quite through with J. D. Y. in cipher, in gold; and for Captain William Meole's company two colours, the ground green with a red cross in a white field."**

*Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Vol. 9, 1675-76*

The regiment carried additional equipment including 700 muskets, 300 pikes, 4 small field pieces 3 pounders, 2 small mortar pieces, 1,000 hand grenades, the musket and pike destined to arm the militia, in all probability, as opposed to regimental spare equipment. The Regiment also took 1,500 "swinefeathers" a by late 17th century archaic item consisting of a 6 to 7 foot pikestaff with steel points at both ends and a hook

to support a musket or pole approximately half way down the length of the shaft. It is probable that the swinefeathers were taken to serve as field expedient “cheviot de frieze” engineer obstacles. The swinefeathers were included in an inventory of “His Majesties Magazine at the Middle Plantation” in 1678 and it is doubtful if they ever saw any use. Doubtless more useful, were the 300 hoes and cloth bags taken to Virginia. In order to support the Regiment on the 6th of November, 1676 a Warrant to the Master General of the Ordnance ordered them:

**“To deliver out of his Majesty's stores fire hundred arms more for the use of forces now sending upon an expedition to Virginia, also to prepare estimate for fifteen drums, halberds, powder, shot, lanterns, and candles, in a fit proportion to the one thousand men now going upon this expedition; and, lastly, for five tents of double canvas for the five captains commanding said forces.”**

*Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Vol. 9, 1675-76*

Before boarding their vessels for a mid winter Atlantic crossing, the troops were issued biscuits and cheese sufficient for three months. On the 24th of November, 1676 the expedition sailed distributed across the fleet as follows:

**“In the *Henry and Anne*, Captain Jeffreys, Lieutenant Rouse, and Ensign Grymes with 195 men. In the *Constant* a Sergeant and 19 men. In the *Barnaby*, Captain Edward Picks, Lieutenant Hetley and Ensign William Mathews, and 116 men. In the *Recovery*, Lieutenant Webb, the rest of Captain Picks' officers and men to make up 100. In the *William and Robert*, Captain Charles Middleton, Lieutenants Francis Hobbin and Thorne, and 167 men. In the *Constant*, Ensign John Jeffreys and 48 men. In the *Francis*, Captain John Mutlowe, Lieutenant Thomas Troutbeck, Ensign Seymour and 97 men. In the *Merchant's Consent*, Lieutenant John Tonge and 79 men, and 39 men in the *Constant*. In the *Golden Lyon*, Captain William Meoles, Lieutenant Thomas Sanders and 148 men. In the *Constant*, Lieutenant Walter Morgan and the rest of the officers to make up 69 men. Total, 1,094 officers and men on board eight ships.”**

*Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Vol 9, 1675-76*

The first ship arriving at the ruins of Jamestown was the *Bristol* ( not mentioned in the above extract, along with *Dartmouth*, *Rose* and *Deptford*) on 29 January 1677. On board was Sir John Berry, Commissioner and Commander of the Naval expedition, Captain Morris and seventy soldiers of Jeffreys' Regiment. The rest of the fleet arrived

by 5 February. Some insight as to the condition of the troops after the ten week crossing can be gained from a report from the Commissioners to the King in June of 1677 stating that "In Captain Middleton's Company there was about 150 such men and officers all sick and that the like number of sick were in every other company." The supplies issued to the troops for the crossing were completely depleted as well. The Regiment was forced to rely on colonists for food and billeting who had barely enough to take care of themselves in the wake of Bacon's Rebellion. By February, the Regiment was headquartered at the Middle Plantation, the future site of Williamsburg, with Captain Meoles' Company and another sent to Falls of the James River, the future site of Richmond, one company was sent to Nansemond County, one remained at the Middle Plantation and one was sent to New Kent County. Those stationed at the outlying locations were recalled to the Middle Plantation in late May.

In May 1677, Colonel Jeffreys, now made the Lieutenant Governor to replace Lord Berkeley, was ordered to return to England leaving behind one hundred men and any of the soldiers who wished to stay as colonists. Elements of the Regiment returning to England were not to depart for another seven months. Those soldiers that remained in service from the 2nd Guards, Holland Regiment and Admirals Regiment changed their coats for the red with blue facings of the First Guards.

The Commissioners, as part of their mission to Virginia, established peace with the local tribes and chose the Middle Plantation as the location for the ceremonial signing which took place on the King's Birthday, 29 May 1677. The Regiment was paraded for this event at which, with their followers, "were present the Queen of the Pamunkey, her son, Captain John West, The Queen of Weyanoke, the King of the Nottoways, and King of the Nansemonds."

Part of the Regiment under the command of Lieutenant Tongue, was sent to Isle of Wight and Nansemond from mid July 1677 to January 1678. During the same time, part of the regiment was in James and York Counties.

On 10 January 1678 the *Unity* took part of the Regiment back to England, arriving at Gravesend on 23 March with Lieutenant Rous with 76 soldiers from Colonel Jeffreys' Company, Captain Mutlowe with Lieutenant Troutbeck and 67 soldiers, and Captain Picts with Ensign Saville and 74 soldiers. This represented a total of 5 Officers and 215 Men. Colonel Jeffreys remained in Virginia as did the Regimental Adjutant, Captain William Morris and the Quartermaster, Lieutenant Tongue. James Archer, the Engineer, remained in service of the Company as late its disbandment in 1682 and appears in the record as late as 1690 as a Captain in the Virginia Militia. The Chaplain and Churgeon were discharged in 1679. The literature makes it clear that Captain Meoles was deceased by January of 1678, based on a request from Lieutenant Tongue for his command. The officers not present in the *Unity* and that are unaccounted for in the literature are Lieutenant Henry Taylor, Ensign William Matthews, Ensign Thomas Seymour, Lieutenant John Webb, Second Lieutenant John Hetley (or Thomas Moile), Captain Charles Middleton, Lieutenant Francis Hobbin/Hellin, Second Lieutenant John Thorne, Ensign John Jeffreys, Lieutenant Walter Morgan, Second Lieutenant Thomas

Sanders, Ensign George Agne, Ensign Grimes, Captain Ralph Delaval and Ensign Francis Wheeler for a total of 16 Officers.

A second group of soldiers under command of Lieutenant Collier of Picks' Company arrived in England in April/May of 1678. An entry in the "Calendar of States Papers Colonial, America and West Indies" states that there were a total of 375 soldiers returned to England from Virginia out of Jeffreys' Regiment. If that figure is correct, and we exclude the 100 men of Jeffreys Company, made up of 20 men from each company who remained in Virginia, we have 525 soldiers who either died in service or chose to stay in Virginia. It is interesting to note that the *Unity* returned with soldiers from the 1st and 2nd Guards and that Lieutenant Collier was in a company from 2nd Guards as well. Could it be that those who chose to stay in Virginia as civilians were predominantly from the Duke of York's Regiment and the Holland Regiment?

In November of 1678, Jeffreys led his company to the Falls of the James in response to an Indian attack on the frontier, arriving too late to make a difference. A party of thirteen Oneida were attacked by eighteen mounted Virginians and the Oneida killed two horsemen and their horses. The Oneida then attacked a house, taking two women and four children captive. The captives were returned to Virginia agents in early 1679 as a result of the intercession of the then Governor of New York, Sir Edmund Andros, who had a treaty with the Oneida.

Plans for a second company in Virginia began in August of 1678, two months after Lieutenant Collier and his men returned to England, with the granting of a commission to Thomas, Lord Culpepper, Governor of Virginia as Captain of a Company of Foot along with Thomas Leigh, Lieutenant and William Armiger, Ensign. It would not be until September 1679 that the Company would embark for Virginia.

In December of 1678 Colonel Herbert Jeffreys' died and was replaced by Sir Henry Chicheley as Lieutenant Governor and Captain of Jeffreys' Company. The Colony of Virginia established at their own expense, in April 1679, four garrison and store houses that were to be constructed at the head of the Rappahannock, Potomac, James and Mattaponi Rivers and to be garrisoned by militia. In May of 1680, the Virginia Assembly asked that ten soldiers from Chicheley's and or Culpepper's Companies replace an equal number of militia at each of the four garrison houses to relieve the burden on the militia. Of those forty soldiers, we know from the record that thirty eight of them were described as mutinous likely due to the lack of pay. By 1681 Chicheley's Company, or elements of it, was paid for musters as opposed to continuous service, having served seven musters of fourteen months from May 1678 to July 1680.

Captain Morris, the adjutant to Jeffreys' Regiment, was still in service in the Virginia Companies as late as 1681 reporting to the Lords of Trade and Plantations in October of that year that both companies were four soldiers short of being at full strength and that the extreme poverty of the colony was a source of potential unrest. His observations proved to be prescient in that there was a rash of tobacco cutting in May of 1682.

The cutting of tobacco plants while still in the fields occurred in response to low tobacco prices and seems to have been a hysterical effort to raise the value of the remaining tobacco. This civil disturbance occurred at the same time as the disbandment of Chicheley's and Culpepper's Companies. The soldiers were unsatisfied with the terms of disbandment and so only contributed to the problem they could have helped quell, if still in service with steady pay. As the Secretary of Virginia wrote to Sir Leoline Jenkins, "They are therefore so far from being as assistance at the only moment they are wanted since their arrival, that their mutinous temper doubles our apprehension of evil events." The disbandment was complete by June 1682 with, "Their arms, partisans, halberts and drums are returned into store and care has been taken for the passages of such as wished to return to England. Many more are provided for by being entertained by the garrisons at the heads of the rivers." Eight of the soldiers were retained to serve as the Governors Guard and it is uncertain how long they remained in service.

## **Conclusions**

Given the absence of military action, it is difficult to assess the contribution of Jeffreys Regiment and the Companies formed from it. Their contribution could have been preemptive, that is to say, perhaps their presence in Virginia prevented colonial unrest and Indian incursions rather than stopping them in process. It is equally difficult to assess the effect of those former Regular Officers who remained in the Virginia colony but there is a reoccurrence of a few of their names in positions of responsibility in colonial service so they continued to have some influence on events.

The Regiment was unique in terms of retaining unit of origin colours and uniforms and the speed with which the unit was formed and deployed. The regiment and follow on companies also represent one of the first examples of a trend in sending British Regulars to colonies in the Caribbean and North America in order to assert control over colonies that in most cases had been for the most part ignored or left alone by the Crown.

The record of Jeffreys Regiment and the companies that followed it is frustratingly incomplete. You will find large gaps in time for which we found no information about the units and their activities. There also is a real lack of information about the soldiers and officers who served. Any insights or sources that would help make a more complete record would be greatly appreciated.

## **Notes on Sources**

This article would not have been possible without two internet sites, the first and foremost being British History on Line (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/Default.aspx>) where an ever expanding amount of British Domestic and Colonial primary source documents are being put on line. The second website Google Books (<http://books.google.com/>) is a valuable resource.

## **Sources**

Cannon, Richard, "*Historical Record of the British Army, the Third Regiment of Foot.*" London, 1837

Hamilton, F.W., "*The Origins and History of the First or Grenadier Guards,*" Vol.I, John Murray, London, 1874

Hening, William, "*The Statues at Large*", Vol. II, 1660-82, Bartow, New York, 1823

Knight, H.R., "*Historical Record of the Buffs,*" Vol. I, Gale and Polden, London, 1905

Lustig, Mary, "*The Imperial Executive in America, Sir Edmund Andros, 1637-1714*", Rosemont Publishing, New Jersey, 2002

McKinnon, Col. "*Origin and Services of the Coldstream Guards,*" Vol. II, Richard Bentley, 1833

Oberg, Michael, ed., "*Samuel Wiseman's Book of Record,*" Lexington Books, MD, 2005

Tisdale, D.A., "*Soldiers of the Virginia Colony, 1607-1699,*" Dietz Publishing, 2000

Tyler, Gardiner, Ed., "*Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography,*" Vol. I, New York, Lewis Historical Publishing Company, New York, 1915

Tyler, Lyon, Ed., "*Williamsburg, the Old Colonial Capital,*" William and Mary Quarterly Historical Magazine, Vol. XVI, Whittet and Shepperson, Richmond, 1908

Webb, Stephen, "*1676 The End of American Independence,*" Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, 1995

"*Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies,*" Volume 9, 1675-76, Volume 10, 1677-80, Volume 11, 1681-85

Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles II, 1676-7

Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles II, 1679-80

Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles II, 1680-1

Copyright © 2010 History Reconsidered, LLC