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LUDLOW’S TRAINED BAND:
A STUDY OF MILITIAMEN IN EARLY STUART ENGLAND

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Writing from Shrewsbury, their county town, on 10 April 1632 Sir Thomas Cornwall and Sir Richard Fox, two of King Charles I’s Deputy Lieutenants for Shropshire, addressed a warrant to the Bailiffs of the town of Ludlow, some 25 miles distant in the south of the county. The Deputies reiterated instructions they had recently received from the Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire, Sir John Egerton, 1st Earl of Bridgewater, that ‘an exact view should be taken of all the trained soldiers within this county and certificate made to his said lordship of the performance thereof’. They explained that Egerton had ordered county-wide inspections of the militia, as in the previous year he had been unable to fulfil his instructions from King Charles’s Privy Council in London to that purpose because of an outbreak of plague, when Shropshire’s Deputies had persuaded the Lord Lieutenant that the annual inspections ‘might be foreborn until the county were cleared’. A year later, the Earl expected of his Deputies that their former orders should now be ‘speedily performed without any excuse’. Consequently both Bailiffs, as Ludlow’s foremost aldermen, were tasked with ensuring that on 8 May the trained foot soldiers of the town and its immediate environs, together with their maintainers, would be assembled by eight o’clock in the morning ready for inspection by Cornwall and Fox. The soldiers were to be ‘present in their arms completely furnished’ accompanied by their maintainers who would be accountable for ‘the defects of their said soldiers arms, if any then be’.¹

The two-dozen militiamen – 12 equipped as musketeers, 12 as pikemen – who dutifully assembled at Ludlow for the muster on 8 May 1632 constituted the town’s Trained Band, a unit maintained at the charge of Ludlow’s inhabitants and with its ranks filled by local men. They were accompanied that morning by up to 90 of their maintainers, those fellow townsmen – and several women – charged with providing the soldiers’ weapons, equipment and pay. During the inspection the name of each soldier and those of his several maintainers were carefully written in a ledger alongside instructions for any remedial action required to correct defective equipment noted by the inspecting officers.² Most likely kept by the town clerk, after the inspection this muster book would have been returned to the New House – the chambers of Ludlow’s corporation – to be held with the remainder of the borough documents.

Today, those civic records of the seventeenth-century town survive – notable for their completeness and preservation – including the orders of the deputy lieutenants (amongst them that of 8 April 1632) and surviving loose folios of the

¹ Order to muster Ludlow soldiers, Ludlow Borough Records (hereafter LBR), Shropshire Archives (SA), LB7/1927.
muster book. Although missing certain years, the muster book’s remaining leaves document the men and the condition of the arms and equipment of the Ludlow Trained Band from 1624 to 1640, spanning the closing year of the reign of King James I and the first 15 years of the reign of his son Charles I, a period when both monarchs sought to increase the numbers and military effectiveness of the county militias – the trained bands – throughout England and Wales. By chance or design, the Ludlow muster book therefore conveniently frames a significant era in the development of the military organisation of the early modern British state when, as Boynton in what remains the definitive study of the Elizabethan and early Stuart militia noted, by embarking on an ambitious military reform programme to mould an ‘exact’ and ‘perfect’ militia, the king ‘called on his subjects to learn the best modern drill, with the most up to date of weapons’.3

The purpose of this article is to present the Ludlow Trained Band as a case study for the organisation, social status, equipping and training of the occasional amateur soldiers of the early Stuart militia. The continuity and variety of the documentary sources within the Ludlow Borough collection encourages such an appraisal and the organisational status of the town band during the 1620s and 1630s means it may be considered as a self-contained unit – a squadron, the approximate equivalent of the modern infantry platoon. In the early to mid-seventeenth century military theoreticians remained divided on the ideal size for a company of foot. Whilst recommendations for the number of common soldiers ranged between 75 and 200, Instructions for Musters and Arms published by the Privy Council in 1623 and noteworthy as the first attempt to codify national standards for militia training, stipulated that ‘the companies are to be of hundreds only, besides officers’.4 Similarly variable was the size of the company’s sub-unit, the squadron. In 1637 Henry Hexham in his military treatise The Principles of the Art Military, which advocated Dutch infantry training and organisation, stated that the company should be divided into three squadrons each led by a corporal, whilst Gervase Markham in The Souldiers Accidence or An Introduction into Military Discipline, first published in 1625 (and reprinted in 1635 and 1639), recommended that the 100-strong foot company should be divided into ‘four corporalships or squadrons’.5 Mustering 24 men the Ludlow squadron conformed in practice to Markham’s theoretical establishment and doubtless also had its own corporal, but his status as a junior officer means he was unrecorded in the muster lists of the common soldiers. With its ratio of pikemen to musketeers fixed at one to one, the squadron’s composition also reflected current military theory advocated in English training manuals, although with the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642 the proportion of musketeers – the shot – in the armies of King and

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4 Anon., Instructions for Musters and Arms and the use thereof: By order from the Lords of his Majesties most Honourable Privy Council (London, 1623).
Parliament would steadily increase, and, as early as 1625, of the 64 trained bandsmen from the Shrewsbury area, 42 were musketeers. Markham recommended that it was a 'good proportion to have a company equally compounded of armed men and shot, the armed men to be all pikes'. The figures in Hexham's Principles illustrating company drill depicted equal numbers of pikes and muskets, as did those in Military Discipline or the Yong Artillery Man, first published in 1635 by William Barriff, a respected writer whose reputation as an expert in infantry training had been fostered in the military societies and private training grounds of London – the so-called artillery gardens – during the preceding decade. With its organisation set within the parameters of prevailing military doctrine the Ludlow Trained Band can be considered a model of its time, a detachment sustained by the town in both its financing and recruitment. Trained as a manageable contingent, the Band would take its place within the higher structure of its company and the county force as Ludlow's contribution to local and national defence.

The Shropshire Trained Bands, as those of all other English and Welsh counties, were established in the early 1570s during the second decade of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I in belated response to developments in weaponry and tactics in continental warfare. The successful deployment of infantry pike and shot formations on the battlefield – as exemplified by the armies of Spain and the Netherlands – required a degree of standardisation in training and equipment difficult to achieve under the English military system. This remained founded on medieval precepts of feudal obligation, reliant on lordly retinues and largely untrained (and variously equipped) levies drawn from the bulk of the able, or physically fit, male population aged between 16 and 60, augmented by foreign mercenaries. The trained bands were intended to remedy deficiencies in organisation and arms by ensuring that the defence of each county was founded on a corps of select and able men of prime military age, recruited from society's better sort, to be mustered at least annually and equipped for, and regularly trained in, modern arms drill and tactics. Although the majority were foot soldiers, each county's trained militia establishment also included a company or troop of horsemen. These new military elites were sustained by their county communities under revised terms of medieval principles of maintenance codified by statute in 1558 during the reign of Queen Mary I which determined, according to wealth in land and goods, an individual's contribution to the financing and equipping of the local militia. The trained band ideal was of county forces constituting a

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7 Markham, Souldiers Accidence, p.1.
8 W. Barriff, Military Discipline or the Yong Artillery Man. Wherein is Discoursed and Shown the Postures both of Musket and Pike ... (London, 1635).
10 Table of rates for provision of horses, armour and weapons according to the Act 4 & 5 Phillip and Mary to be had May 1st, 7 Mar. 1558: C. S. Knighton (ed.), Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Mary I, 1553-1558 (London, 1998), p. 320.
standing army in waiting, trained, equipped and in readiness to muster at times of threatened invasion.

As defenders of the realm the trained bands were also tasked with quelling civil disturbance and, in extremis, rebellion. Whilst the fullest study of the governance of Stuart England has concluded that the militia's record in this role was 'certainly not impressive', nevertheless, county leaderships looked to the trained bands to maintain stability in uncertain times. During the winter of 1641/42, when rebellion in Ireland and national political instability fuelled fears of a papist insurrection, instructions for the security of their county were circulated amongst Shropshire's justices of the peace that if 'any unlawful assemblies be gathered together to the disturbance of the public peace', then the county trained bands should be deployed to suppress them.

Recruited in the largest land-locked English county, Shropshire's Trained Bands were numerically second-rate, especially in comparison with those of counties bounded by the coast, which, as secondary only to the navy as a frontline against invasion, consequently shouldered a greater burden in contributing trained soldiers. The returns of the annual county musters submitted to the Privy Council in 1635 for example accounted County Durham's strength in foot at 811 men and Lincolnshire's at 1,800, whilst Dorsetshire had mustered 1,500 men and was committed to the expansion of its trained bands to 2,100 in three regiments, an objective impressively accomplished by early 1638 when the county declared 2,140 foot. In contrast the strength of Shropshire's foot bands, returned as 600 in 1617, remained the same in 1638 when they mustered 341 musketeers and 259 pikemen. In addition, the county's trained horse numbered 100 troopers that year. Shropshire's strength in foot in 1638 did compare favourably with neighbouring counties, being less than Worcestershire's 800 but equalling Cheshire's 600, exceeding the 400 men of Staffordshire and the 480 of Herefordshire and double Montgomeryshire's 300. Whilst studies which have demonstrated the variable response at county level to the national re-modelling of the trained bands from 1625 to 1638 – and to the attempted deployment of county detachments in the English armies mobilised against the Scots Covenanters in the Bishops' Wars of 1639-40 – suggest that generalisations must remain qualified, the Shropshire Trained Bands can be considered as a typical inland county force of

12 Order of the Justices at Shrewsbury, 17 Jan. 1642, SA, LBR, LB7/2315.
15 The Trained Bands of the Several Counties, State Papers of King Charles I, TNA, SP16/381/66.
the period and, by extension, the Ludlow Band as a typical provincial detachment of the English militia. It is posited here that the character of the Ludlow Band – in its personnel, equipment and training – may both reflect and inform conclusions on King Charles I’s policy to ‘perfect’ the militia. As that policy was superintended in Shropshire by successively diligent Lords Lieutenant – William Compton, Earl of Northampton from 1617 to 1630 and the Earl of Bridgewater from 1631 to 1642 – for whom Ludlow was their administrative seat, an examination of the town squadron would be expected to reveal evidence for this period of military reform.

Contemporary opinion on the military effectiveness of the Caroline trained bands was divided. Unsurprisingly, in July 1626 King Charles I – voiced through the directive of his Privy Council – ‘wisely considered that militia well ordered is the sure and constant bulwark and defence of this kingdom’, a conviction echoed 14 years later by the representatives of the 650 trained-bandsmen of Hertfordshire who, when 260 of their number were to be enlisted into the expeditionary force to be pitted against the Scots, petitioned their county deputy lieutenants ‘that the trained soldiers are the chiefest strength and glory of this kingdom and not to be employed in case of necessity’. Conversely, when addressing the rudiments of company drill in his manual of 1635, William Barriff mocked the ‘little knowing soldiers of the trained bands’, and in 1645 the Parliamentarian preacher John Corbet wrote scathingly of the militia in 1642: ‘The trained bands accounted the main support of the realm, and bulwarks against unexpected invasions, were effeminate in courage and incapable of discipline, because their whole course of life was alienated from warlike employment’. Modern historians, however, have drawn more positive conclusions. Fissel, in his study of the Bishops’ Wars considered that by 1638 the trained bands had reached their highest proficiency and were as well prepared against the threat of foreign invasion as their Elizabethan forebears, whilst Fletcher noted a general national momentum and vigour in mustering during the 1630s. In his study of the Personal Rule of King Charles I, Sharpe concluded that whilst the county militias often appeared ‘a ramshackle band’ during the 1620s, historians who dismissed the exact militia programme in the 1630s were mistaken and that recognition of the ‘need for improved defences’ had permeated the shires.

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LUDLOW'S MILITIAMEN 1624-1640

The coast was, of course, distant from Ludlow and concepts of enhanced national defence were probably far from the thoughts of many of its 2,600 or so inhabitants for much of the 1620s and 1630s.²⁰ Built on a sloping ridge above the River Teme, the seventeenth-century town was a market centre for agricultural produce from surrounding areas and a hub for trades which served that agrarian economy. Ludlow's prosperity during the Middle Ages had depended firstly on the trade in wool and then in cloth, but by the seventeenth century the leather trade had eclipsed both.²¹ Visiting Ludlow in August 1635 the future Parliamentarian civil war general Sir William Brereton described a town 'seated on the side of an hill, and is built from the bottom to the top, whereon the castle stands. The seat hereof is more healthful and pleasant, than the land rich and fruitful'.²² The castle – which Brereton described as 'a pretty neat castle, standing high' – was the residency of the Lord President of the Council in the Marches of Wales. Formalised in 1534 the Council was in effect a regional government for the Principality and several adjacent English counties over which it exercised devolved powers of royal authority – politically for the supervision of county administrations and legally as a court of appeal. Although its powers would be revoked by Parliament in 1641, the Council remained active during the 1620s and 1630s, maintaining a grand household at the castle and playing a significant role in sustaining Ludlow's economy.

Concomitant with the Lord Presidency of the Council in the Marches was the Lord Lieutenancy of the counties under its jurisdiction. As Lord President during the 1620s the Earl of Northampton was Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and 11 of the 12 counties of Wales, as well as his native Warwickshire.²³ First promoted and then made permanent during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the lieutenancy was the executive of the Privy Council in administering the military organisation of the shires, a role in which, as noted above, both Sir William Compton and Sir John Egerton were diligent. Egerton was a hard-working and able administrator, whilst Northampton has been described as 'one of the most knowledgeable and conscientious lord lieutenants in promoting the militia's efficiency', whose advocacy of standardisation in training helped foster King James's Conciliar

²¹ Ibid., p. 119, p. 124, p. 165.
Instructions of 1623. However able, neither Compton nor Egerton alone could oversee the militias of their multiple lieutenancies and in this they were reliant upon their several deputies in each county. A deputy lieutenancy, more than the shrievalty, marked to those men from the higher reaches of the gentry who attained it ‘the pinnacle in the hierarchy of county offices’. Knowledgeable about his county community, a deputy commanded respect and was influential in gentry circles, useful attributes when chivvying and cajoling the fulfilment of military obligations. A dutiful deputy was therefore a valuable asset to Lord Lieutenants like Northampton and Bridgewater, neither of whom were native to any of the Presidency counties they oversaw. Of five Shropshire deputies mentioned in the Ludlow papers, the most closely associated with the town squadron was Sir Thomas Cornwall, 12th Baron of nearby Burford, who was also county sheriff in 1634. In 1626 the Earl of Northampton had commended to the Privy Council – as an ‘example to others’ – Cornwall’s dedication to local military affairs and he appears to have remained active in militia duties until his death, aged 65, in 1638.

If the deputies’ role was largely administrative, responsibility for training and disciplining the militia lay with men of similar or lesser gentry status, the county muster master and individual company captains. As the only stipendiary officer in a county’s military hierarchy the muster master’s role was to superintend training and equipment. The pre-requisites for the office were previous military experience – to be ‘a praetick [practiced] soldier and expert in the warres abroad’ – and resident in the county he marshalled. The Muster Master for Shropshire in the 1630s was Edward Burton of Atcham, a local man and appointee of the Earl of Bridgewater. Burton’s involvement with the Ludlow squadron is known only from correspondence concerning his salary, particularly its arrears. Indeed local grievances against Burton’s £50 annual fee developed in April-July 1635 into a cause célébre with overtones questioning the constitutional legality of the royal prerogative in enforcing militia obligations nationally.


25 Fletcher, Reform in the Provinces, p. 297.

26 Burford lies just within the county boundary of Shropshire, seven miles south east of Ludlow.

27 Northampton to Conway, 6 Dec. 1626, State Papers of King Charles I, TNA, SP16/4, fol. 44.


In London on the town's business, Richards advised that as only Ludlow and the neighbouring hundred of Purslow remained in default of Burton's fee he would set a levy for the arrears on his return, and that in the interim Hackluit should write a commitment of intent, so as to avoid 'my Lord President's displeasure'. The corporation also sought Sir Thomas Cornwall's advice, Bailiff Gregory visiting the deputy lieutenant to ask his opinion about the muster master's fee. Although unnamed in the muster book the frequent references to him in the borough accounts make it certain that the commander of the Ludlow squadron, since at least 1622, was Captain Thomas Scriven of Frodesley. The 600 foot soldiers of Shropshire's early-Jacobean trained bands were probably organised into four companies, each led by a captain. If that organisation remained extant into the Caroline period Scriven's 150-strong company would have incorporated soldiers maintained by their parishes, the clergy and wealthier individuals, as well as town contingents like Ludlow's Band, together drawn from the south-Shropshire hundreds of Clun, Purslow, Munslow, and Overs. In his fifties during the 1630s, as a younger man Scriven may well have soldiered professionally in mainland Europe. A deputy lieutenant by 1639, during the Civil War he was mortally wounded in October 1643 leading the Shropshire Trained Bands in the king's service against the Parliamentary garrison town of Wem. In his pre-war militia duties at Ludlow, Captain Scriven was assisted by one or more lieutenants – a Lieutenant Browne is mentioned in the borough accounts – and town councillors, including the bailiffs, who organised local musters and accompanied the town soldiers during training away from Ludlow.

The author of the most recent assessment of the performance of the trained bands during the Personal Rule of King Charles I acknowledged that due to the limitations of his sources – the account books of parish officers in predominantly rural English parishes – little could be said of the social status of the soldiers. In contrast, the relatively detailed record from Ludlow – borough accounts, council minutes, assessments for taxation and the parish register – allows a more than speculative reconstruction of the status of militiamen within an urban community.

Guardians of the kingdom against invasion from without and rebellion from within, it was accepted that the ranks of the early Stuart trained bands should be

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30 Richards to Hackluit, 19 June 1635, LBR, SA, LB7/1930.
32 Of Frodesley Hall, some 18 miles north of Ludlow.
filled by men with a vested interest in preserving national security and social order, especially those with a sustaining economic role in the fabric of their communities—tradesmen, businessmen, land and property owners, a social class neatly categorised as ‘substantial men below the gentry’. As the embittered Hertfordshire bandsmen threatened with conscription in 1640 pointed out: ‘the inconveniences of pressing us of the trained band are many and important, for the trade of the market towns and chiefest husbandry and tillage of the county pass through our hands, and are directed by us, our sons and servants’. It was equally thought that possession of modern weapons and regular training in their effective use should remain beyond the reach of the lowest and therefore potentially most unstable social stratum. Consequently instructions from lords lieutenant and their deputies reiterated the importance of choosing recruits of suitable social standing. In 1617 Lord Gerard, then Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire, instructed his deputy Sir Robert Needham that ‘none but selected men of worth and quality are to serve in the trained band’, a pre-requisite defined in 1625 by the deputies of his successor, the Earl of Northampton, who ordered the Bailiffs of Ludlow that at the muster on 5 October three able men, ‘fit for the service, that is men of the better quality, to whit freeholders, farmers, owners of lands or householders’, were to be present as replacements for any soldiers of the town band whose fitness was deemed to be ‘decayed’. Directions for Musters, a new infantry drill manual privately published in 1638 in revision of the Privy Council’s Instructions of 1623 and 1631, re-affirmed that recruits for the trained bands ‘must be men sufficient, of able and active bodies; none of the meaner sort, nor servants; but only such as be of the gentrie, free-holders, and good farmers, or their sonnes, that are like to be resident’.

To what extent, then, did recruits of this recommended quality take their place in the Ludlow Trained Band? The identification of individuals from the record is complicated by families who traditionally named sons after fathers—as prevailed in the Colbatch family—and by the pitfalls of false assumption; Richard Stanway, son of Thomas, registered as Christened in June 1616 at first appears the youngest bandsman in 1640, until it is noted that Richard Stanway the ‘soldier’ had actually served since 1628, but is unrecorded in the parish register. Nevertheless, a reconstruction of the social standing of the soldiers of the Ludlow Band can be attempted with reasonable confidence.

Seventeen soldiers who mustered at Ludlow in January 1639 can be identified in the assessment laid in September of that year for the town’s share of Shropshire’s writ for ship money. The annual levies to finance the navy laid on

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36 Fissel, Bishops’ Wars, p. 204.
37 Hamilton, CSPD, 1640, p. 95.
38 Maxwell Lyte, ‘Manuscripts of the Earl of Kilmorey’, p. 365; Order to muster Ludlow soldiers, SA, LBR, LB7/2228.
all English and Welsh counties from 1635 to 1640, drew into national taxation for
the first time the majority of the middling classes who previously had mostly
avoided the collection of parliamentary subsidies granted to the monarch, which
were paid largely by the gentry and nobility. The soldiers assessed for ship money
therefore appear to have been freeholders, or at least men of stable income and
fixed abode, with the majority of them falling within the low to median band of
the assessment at between three and six shillings. There were certainly soldier
property-owners, whose full municipal rights (granted by their status as free
burgesses) included disfranchisement to elect the town aldermen and councillors,
the Twelve & Twenty-Five; musketeers Richard Davies and Edward Brompton
were elected free burgesses between 1631 and 1633, as were the pikemen John
Brongwyn, Thomas Peerce and Richard Marchland. Election as a free burgess
was the first rung on the ladder of civic responsibility, granting eligibility to serve
as a councillor. Thomas Hitchcocks, a musketeer in 1635/36, was elected one of
Ludlow’s twenty-five councillors in October 1635. Described as a gentleman in
1636, in April 1639, when no longer a soldier but an alderman, as one of the
town’s two Chamberlains and High Constables he accompanied the squadron to
Shrewsbury for training. A cadre of soldiers was always present in the
membership of The Twelve and Twenty-Five; in 1639 there were four, the
brothers Edward and William Colbatch, Richard Davies and William Botterel.
Apparently men desirous of status within their community, William Colbatch and
Botterel, whilst serving as soldiers, were also Churchwardens of St. Laurence’s –
Ludlow’s sole parish church – in 1629 and 1635 respectively, as was Thomas
Hitchcocks in 1631 and Thomas Langton in 1636 when he was a pikeman. A
number of soldiers also went on to attain higher public office. Walter Stead, a
musketeer in the 1620s, was a bailiff in 1641/42, as was Richard Davies in
1643/44, whilst William Browne, a musketeer in 1639/40, was a chamberlain in
1643/44.

Ludlow’s ship money roll for 1640 allows identification of the trades of a
number of townsfolk who were then, or had been, trained soldiers. The
haberdasher Edward Brompton and Richard Marchland, a dyer, represented the
town’s declining but still locally important cloth trade. Craftsmen providing goods
and services in the local economy included Thomas Peerce, a cobbler, the glover
Henry Powis, and the hatter Thomas Ward. Edward Colbatch was a baker, as
was William Beddow, a musketeer from 1635 to 1640. Another musketeer,
Thomas Hayward, was a carpenter who had worked on the town Alms Houses in
1636. Richard Davies’s trade, recorded in the ship money assessment of

41 Sharpe, Personal Rule, pp. 570-1; J. Morrill, Revolt in the Provinces: The People of England and
the Tragedy of Civil War, 1630-1648 (Harlow, 1994), pp. 42-43.
42 Ludlow Corporation Order Book, 1638/39, LBR, SA, (fiche) 4674.
43 Ibid.
44 Faraday, Ludlow, p. 197.
45 Ludlow ship money assessment roll, Feb. 1640, LBR, SA, LB/17143.
46 Bailiff’s Accounts 1636/37, LBR, SA, LB8/1/157, fol. 9.
September 1635, was that of mason – in effect a general builder – as was Francis Bibb whose payments for work on the fabric of St Laurence’s Church in the 1630s are recorded in the borough accounts. A musketeer from 1627 to 1632, Lewis Gwillam and his workmen were regularly employed on building projects for the town council. Where their occupations are unstated, soldiers titled Mr – such as Walter Stead, William Botterel and Thomas Hitchcocks – are best considered as men of some means of, or with aspirations to, gentry status. As a select few chosen from the local able-bodied male population, it would be expected that neither 16 nor 60 year olds – the extreme ages of military eligibility – would be found in the Ludlow Band, and indeed the mean average age of those 12 soldiers in 1639 whose birth is recorded in the parish register was 30 years, the youngest being the 18 year old William Griffiths, the most senior Edward Colbatch at 42.

Within the limitations of the sources employed here as indicators of social status – evidence of occupation, wealth, or civic duty – a number of Ludlow’s trained soldiers remain unidentifiable and it is possible that some were substitutes, that is servants or dependants hired or nominated to serve in a wealthier man’s stead. Nevertheless, the evidence tends to the conclusion that the majority of men in the squadron conformed to the accepted social criteria of militia service and represented Stuart society’s middling sort. This raises the question of motivation; why did these men of relatively independent means become amateur soldiers? They were certainly not conscripted, or impressed, a method of recruitment reserved for filling the ranks of expeditionary forces sent overseas. Whilst rural parish and town ward constables were often tasked with procuring conscripts, when Ludlow’s Constables were instructed by the Bailiffs to bring three able men from each ward to the muster at Shrewsbury in October 1625 as recruits for the militia, they were more likely employed for their detailed knowledge of their communities – and so able to nominate and encourage likely volunteers – than for their coercive powers as local policemen. The contingents sent to the Continent during the wars against France and Spain from 1624-30 were composed largely of pressed able-bodied bachelors, drawn from the lower reaches of society including the urban unemployed, the rural landless and poor, vagrants and petty criminals. There was a social polarity in obligations of military service in Elizabethan and early Stuart England: ‘whilst the militiaman was obliged to defend the community in which he lived … so the pressed soldier (unable to contribute financially) did good service by toiling in the ranks wherever his king had need of him’. Soldiers of the trained bands were thereby exempted from service overseas; when, for example, the Privy Council sent orders to the shires in February 1627 for conscripts – including 100 men from Shropshire – to reinforce  

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48 Order to Muster at Shrewsbury, 14 Sept. 1625, SA, LBR, LB7/228.
50 Fissel, Bishops’ Wars, p. 215.
the English regiments in the Low Countries to be sent to serve the King of Denmark (Charles I's uncle) none were to be enlisted from the trained bands. Service as a trained soldier therefore brought privilege and with it a certain status, which made an attractive incentive to volunteer. Writing around the year 1700 the recent social history of the mid-Shropshire rural community of Myddle, his home parish, Richard Gough noted that before the Civil War (when he was a boy) 'it was accopmited [accounted] a creditable service to be a soldier in the county militia', an opinion probably also held by many of Ludlow's soldiers and which encouraged their lengthy service. One-third of the men mustered on 31 August 1640 had been soldiers since 1628 and throughout the period most served for three to four years; eight of the twelve pikemen mustered on 25 September 1636 were present in August 1640. Some families appear to have embraced trained band soldiering. Brothers Edward and William Colbatch, born in 1597 and 1600 respectively, served together as musketeers throughout the 1630s. Born in 1609, Matthew Sherwood took his father's place as a musketeer in the 1630s, and family succession is also suggested with the Bromptons, Richard taking Michael's place in 1640 when another Brompton, Edward, was a musketeer. Succession therefore helped to fill the ranks; otherwise recruits were selected by the deputy lieutenants from the candidates presented before them at musters. Military theorists provided rudimentary guidelines for selection based on fitness and stature. Markham recommended 'tall and best persons to be pikes, the squarest and broadest will be fit to carry muskets', so perhaps the builders Lewis Gwillam and Richard Davies were such stocky and sturdy musketeers.

These men, like their comrades, appear to have been diligent in their attendance at inspections, the numbered lists of named soldiers mustered being notably complete throughout the period. Only for the muster of 23 October 1633 are absentee noted in the book, making the non-attendance of three men that day exceptional. Elsewhere, when on occasion no name is given against the number in the muster list, this appears to have marked the transition between a soldier leaving and a new recruit being appointed rather than absenteeism. Whilst a note in the chamberlain's accounts for 1631/32 of payment made to a clerk 'for writing 6 warrants for the summoning of soldiers' on Captain Scriven's behalf may suggest coercion was used on occasion as a motivating force, it is more likely those warrants were issued to advertise the inspection in May 1632 which, after a lapse in mustering of one or more years, necessitated a formal notification to call the men to arms once again. Coercion was probably rarely necessary, as the duties of a trained soldier were not unduly demanding. As will be considered later, training seldom occupied more than a few days of the working year and then pay was provided. The daily rate for the Ludlow Band is unknown, but is suggested by comparables. The pay of the soldiers of the Shropshire town of Bridgnorth

51 Maxwell Lyte, 'Manuscripts of the Earl of Kilmory', pp. 369-370.
52 R. Gough, Antiquities and Memoirs of the Parish of Myddle, County of Salop, A.D. 1700, facsimile of 1875 original printing (Shrewsbury, no date), p. 151.
53 Markham, Soldiers Accidence, pp. 1-2.
increased from one shilling (1s) per day in the early 1630s to two shillings and five pence (2s 5d) by 1642, whilst the Drapers’ Company of Shrewsbury paid 2s daily to the trained soldiers they maintained during the 1630s.\textsuperscript{54} In 1640/41 Shrewsbury’s corporation paid 14d daily (excluding food, or ‘diet’) to ‘Headworkmen’ such as masons, joiners and wheelwrights working for the town, so one to two shillings was probably considered fair recompense to a tradesman for a day’s soldiering, especially so when food, drink and other out of pocket expenses were also paid; on his return to Ludlow after accompanying the squadron to Shrewsbury in 1639, Chamberlain Thomas Hitchcocks claimed for an additional £1 9s 10d in disbursements, being ‘more than he had received’ in expenses for the soldiers.\textsuperscript{55}

Richard Gough concluded his comment on the popularity of pre-civil war militia service in Shropshire that ‘many persons that were maintainers did themselves serve as soldiers’.\textsuperscript{56} There appears little evidence for this at Ludlow, where the role of maintainer to a trained soldier appears more a thankless obligation. Whilst the grounds for their nomination is unclear – other than a perceived ability to pay – the maintainers, like their soldiers, were selected by the lieutenancy, ‘appointed by the liking and approbation of the said Lord Lieutenant or his Deputy Lieutenants’, as the Earl of Northampton noted drily in May 1627.\textsuperscript{57} The maintainers were obligated to appear in person at musters when they would be held accountable for the condition of their soldier’s arms and for the regularity, or otherwise, of his pay. Three or more of his fellow townsmen maintained each soldier, and a small number of widows also shouldered their family’s obligation for maintenance. The maintainers appear to have been from those middle and higher tiers of Ludlow society (including the gentry) above the majority of the soldiers, with a much greater relative proportion of ‘Misters’ and ‘Gentlemen’ amongst the maintainers than the soldiers. A sample of 16 of the maintainers of the eight longest-serving soldiers in 1640 identified in that year’s ship money roll includes nine gentlemen, with a further four termed ‘Mister’. These men were in the higher tax-paying bracket, assessed at 10s or more, including William Bowdler – a gentleman of Castle Ward and one of four maintainers to the pikeman Owen Jones – who was one of the highest payers of ship money in Ludlow being charged at 36 shillings. All four of the men who maintained the musketeer Thomas Hayward from 1628 to 1640 were listed as Mister, as were six of the eight maintainers of pikeman Thomas Ward during the same period. Musketeer Hugh Powell’s four maintainers in 1640 were the

\textsuperscript{54} For contemporary monetary values: 12 pennies (12d) = one shilling (1s); 20 shillings = one pound (£1); £1 = 240d. Bridgnorth Corporation account roll for 1634, SA, BB/D/1/2/1/47; Bridgnorth Corporation Common Hall Order Book, 1634-85, SA, BB/C/1/1/1, no folio; Shrewsbury Drapers’ Company Minute Book, 1607-1740, SA, 1831/1/4/17, fol. 51.


\textsuperscript{56} Gough, \textit{Antiquities and Memoirs of the Parish of Myddle}, p. 151.

\textsuperscript{57} Muster Book, SA, LBR, LB7/2181, fol. 10.
ex-soldier Mr Thomas Hitchcock, Rees Jones, a gentleman assessed for 30s in ship money, Mr Robert Cole, assessed at 10s, and the shoemaker Thomas Hunt, taxed 5s 5d.  

The gradual increase in the number of maintainers to the 24 soldiers of the Ludlow squadron recorded in the muster book, from 84 in 1627 to 116 in 1640, parallels the period of national reform of the militia. This broadening of the obligation of maintenance must be interpreted as an attempt to distribute more evenly amongst Ludlow’s populace the increasing costs of training the soldiers and providing the new equipment which the ‘perfect’ militia programme required. In May 1627, the Earl of Northampton made a proposal to address what may have become widespread concern in Ludlow over increased military charges. Whilst the maintainers would continue to fund new equipment, the pay and other expenses of the town squadron, including gunpowder and match cord expended in training, would be paid for by the corporation out of a general levy assessed upon Ludlow’s inhabitants. Five years later, however, on 9 May 1632 – the day after the muster at Ludlow long postponed by fears of plague – the Deputy Lieutenants Sir Thomas Cornwall and Sir Richard Fox, whilst still in town, wrote to the Bailiffs expressing their concern that, despite Northampton’s proposal having been formalised in March 1628 and the maintainers advised accordingly, the soldiers’ charges, including their pay, remained in arrears to the sum of £8. The deputies criticised both corporation and maintainers for their neglect of what ‘ought in conscience long ago to have been paid where it is due’ and demanded that the £8 should be collected and paid without fail. There appears no surviving record of this money having being raised, and although it may well have been, the absence in the town accounts of other disbursements for soldiers’ pay and munitions suggests that apart from expenses paid on occasion by the corporation for training away from home, the Ludlow squadron was wholly funded by the maintainers. The gradual rise in their number does suggest an initiative to set military charges on a more equitable and sustainable footing; the increased average ratio of maintainers to musketeers – from 4:1 in 1627 to 5.6:1 in 1640 – would have helped defray the cost of the powder, match and – on occasion – bullets expended during training.

Financing the trained bands seems to have posed a greater challenge than finding suitable recruits, in Ludlow and elsewhere. In December 1626, the Earl of Northampton advised Secretary of State Conway of problems that he had faced generally in his Presidency which were similar to those he would attempt to resolve locally at Ludlow the following year. Northampton criticised those ‘slack’ in contributing money for match, powder and other military supplies and bemoaned the lack of effective local sanctions; referring defaulters to the Privy Council in London, Northampton considered, ‘will be but a trouble to your Lordships both for the number of such as refuse, for the quality of the person being mean, and for

59 Muster Book, SA, LBR, LB7/2181, fol. 10.
60 Order for arrears, 9 May 1632, SA, LBR, LB7/1927.
the poorness of the thing, being only great in example’. Were the lieutenancy
granted fuller powers of enforcement, Northampton believed ‘the country would
soon be brought to conformity’.  

However, to fulfil the twin main objectives of the reformed militia programme of the 1620s and 1630s, which were to improve both training and equipment, Northampton, like other lord lieutenants, was dependant on county communities and especially the maintainers of individual soldiers. The Ludlow muster book reflects the difficulties the lieutenancy faced in re-equipping the trained bands using methods of funding which, whilst largely reliant on consent and co-operation, operated under the implicit threat – albeit administratively cumbersome – of retribution by the Privy Council.

The Conciliar directive to the lord lieutenants in June 1623 (reiterated in
1624, 1625 and 1626) stated that the arms of the trained bands, that is equipment
and weapons, were to be of the ‘best modern form’, albeit with the caveat that
counties were not expected to provide ‘new arms at once’ but rather to phase
them in, replacing old and faulty equipment. The arms of a pikeman – whose
offensive and defensive roles on the battlefield necessitated close quarter combat
– were body armour, a pike and a short sword. The Privy Council’s Instructions for
Musters of 1623 and 1631 gave the armour of a pikeman as a helmet, or
‘headpiece’, a gorget to protect the neck and a cuirass of back and breast plates,
as did the Directions for Musters of 1638 which also advocated tassets – thigh guards
attached to the breastplate. Markham also recommended tassets and described
the headpiece as a ‘good’ combe-cap, a ridged and brimmed helmet of the morion type.

In 1624 Ludlow’s ‘corslets’ (the contemporary term for both a pikeman
and his panoply) wore an obsolescent form of half-armour including tassets and
also vambraces and pauldrons – armour for the arms and shoulders respectively,
which, in 1625, Markham considered both unnecessary and cumbersome. The
muster book records that corslets and helmets, both old and new, were to be
painted black, ‘for’, as Markham recommended, ‘it will keep the longer from the
rust’. As for pikes, Conciliar directives stipulated only that they should all be of
uniform length, which Directions for Musters gave as 17 feet including the spear-
point, or ‘head’, and Markham as 15 feet plus the head. The pikes of Ludlow’s
squadron conformed to Markham’s specification, with notes in the muster book
for them to be ‘made up to 15 feet beside the head’. The squadron’s corslets also
wore swords (listed as ‘tucks’), suspended from a leather belt and hanger, as did
the musketeers, swords apparently replacing the daggers with which Ludlow’s
shot were armed in the early 1620s.

At the musters of 1625-6 the corslets appear to have been considered fully

61 Northampton to Conway, 6 Dec. 1626, State Papers of King Charles I, TNA, SP16/4, fol. 44.


63 Anon., Instructions for Musters and Arms and the use thereof: By order from the Lords of his

64 Markham, Souldiers Accidence, p. 2.

65 Ibid.
equipped, and as such marked ‘complete’ in the muster book. In July 1627, however, all but three were to be provided with ‘new arms’, short pikes having to be replaced and others fitted with new heads, or ‘points’. At the muster in March 1628 the inspecting officers appear to have countenanced nothing but a complete replacement of obsolete or worn out equipment, when only one of the 12 corslets was declared complete and seven were ‘wholly defective’. Doubtless much to the frustration of Captain Scriven and the deputy lieutenants, the overhaul of the equipment of the corslets appears a tortuous process that dragged on throughout the 1630s and is typified by the condition of one long-serving pikeman, Evan Jones. In March 1628 Jones’s headpiece was deemed defective, as it was in May 1632; in July 1635 he was described as requiring new arms, remaining in the same condition in September 1636; in January 1639 Jones was still ‘defect in arms’, but in February 1640 he was finally listed as complete. In October 1633 just two corslets were complete and even in January 1639 – when the preparedness of the militia nationally was heightened with the likelihood of war against the Scots – only a further two had passed muster without defect. Not until the final recorded inspection on 31 August 1640 were all corslets complete, with the exception of two new soldiers.66

Re-equipping Ludlow’s musketeers took a similar course. Instructions for Musters recommended that a musketeer should have a matchlock musket, with a forked rest to support the barrel, a bandolier carrying charges of powder, a sword with belt and hanger, and a headpiece. All of a unit’s muskets were to be of the same calibre, or bore.67 Directions for Musters stated: ‘the musketeer must be armed with a good musket (the barrel of 4 foot long, the bore of 12 bullets in the pound rowling [rolling] in), a rest, bandolier, headpiece, a good sword, girdle and hangers’.68 Markham detailed essential ancillary equipment including a mould for casting bullets, a bullet bag, and a ramrod (or ‘scouring stick’) with a ‘worm’ fitting to clear the musket barrel of fouling.69 The earliest entries in the Ludlow muster book – undated but pre-dating 1624 – record musketeers lacking these necessary items, including Philip Harper who was ‘defect’ in belt, mould, worm, scouring stick and rest, but at least the shot of the Band were then no longer equipped with calivers, a type of lightweight musket declared obsolete by the Privy Council in 1618.70 In 1624, apart from two men requiring new muskets, most musketeers were complete, but in the wartime inspection of April 1626 only two were found to be so amongst a litany of defects including muskets either too long in the barrel or too narrow in bore, faulty firing mechanisms and defective bandoleers. However, in July 1627 apart from Lewis Gwillam, whose ‘arms were not seen’ and William Wall, a new soldier, only one musketeer was defective, thereby marking considerable effort to repair or buy new firearms. In October

68 Anon., Directions for Musters, no folio.
69 Markham, Souldiers Accidence, p.3.
1633 whilst all muskets were serviceable the inspection revealed all but one of the musketeers’ headpieces to be defective, as were a similar number in September 1636 when four muskets were also found faulty. By August 1640 amongst the dozen musketeers a similar ‘completeness’ to that of the corslets had been achieved, with only five helmets and two belts defective. (Whilst considering their equipment, it is worth noting here that there appears no evidence for Ludlow’s soldiers having worn uniform. They most likely trained in their workaday or even best clothes, thereby perhaps marking an accepted distinction between volunteer militiamen and enlisted king’s men, whose clothing was funded from coat and conduct money).

Considered against the background of national reform, the 15-year record of the re-arming of the Ludlow Trained Band appears less than impressive and suggests an underlying conflict of wills between conscientious, even zealous, inspecting officers and maintainers concerned more with their purses than the niceties of standardisation and uniformity in arms. A comment in the muster book by the aldermen John Aston and Edward Powis of 7 May 1640 tells of continued foot-dragging by maintainers: ‘We called before us the maintainers in defect and found nothing done more than when the captain was present, only fair promises anew from so many as did appear’. Attempts to introduce equipment of the ‘modern fashion’ cannot have been helped by a high turnover in maintainers – only one long-serving soldier, Thomas Hayward, had the same maintainers in 1640 as he had had in 1627 – and what appears to have been a policy of equipping new soldiers afresh, rather than handing down the equipment of their predecessor. Thus, in 1639 the cost of equipping the recently recruited musketeer Thomas Powell was calculated as £2 8s 6d, shared between his five maintainers.

By definition, practice and skill at arms differentiated the trained soldiers from the untrained, able men and improvement in training, both in quality and regularity, was the second key objective of the reformed militia programme. In 1623 the Privy Council’s Instructions for Musters were distributed to help the lieutenancy order and exercise a militia nationally deemed not ‘so exact and serviceable’, and in 1626 the Council decreed that all trained soldiers were ‘to be perfectly instructed in the exercise of their arms and order’, a directive reiterated in 1628 and 1629. Evidence for the training regime of Ludlow’s soldiers is found in the muster book, the surviving orders of the deputies and also in the borough accounts, which record expenditure for entertaining Captain Scriven, Sir Thomas Cornwall and other deputies at militia events. In 1628, for example, the book documents a muster on 28 April and the accounts record 2s 6d paid ‘for a pot of

71 Muster Book, SA, LBR, LB7/2181, fol. 20.
72 This may have been unofficial policy and welcomed as a means of ensuring there was a stock of arms in the wider community to equip the untrained able men in time of war, as suggested by, for example, the Privy Council’s directive to the lords lieutenant of 10 July 1626: Lyle, Acts of the Privy Council, vol. 41, p. 73.
sack for Captain Scriven when he came to view the trained band’ on 6 November. The recorded inspections, part of the annual administrative procedure of providing the Privy Council with certification of the county militia’s numbers and condition, therefore represent only part of a fuller regime of training and mustering, although training also took place at inspections; for that on 8 July 1635, for example, the Ludlow musketeers were to be provided with a half-pound of powder and a yard of match ‘for that day’s service’. These training ‘events’ were of variable duration. Whilst many occupied one day, an example of a two-day event was 10-11 March 1627 when the town drummer was paid ‘for tending on the trained band’, whilst later that year Chamberlain Samuel Lloyd claimed expenses for three days and two nights spent at Shrewsbury with the soldiers attending a general, or county-wide muster. Similarly, training may have involved the Ludlow squadron alone or else all of Scriven’s company, as is suggested on 25 April 1626 when soldiers of other hundreds were ‘trained with our men’.

From the sources it is possible to reconstruct a suggested schedule of training for the period, the number of events and likely duration, based on the borough’s accounting year – from 28 October to the same following. Thus, whilst three days’ training probably occurred in 1624/25, war-driven military reform led to an increased seven events (ten days plus?) in 1625/26, with five events (eight days plus?) in 1626/27. Training dropped to perhaps four days in 1627/28, but increased to three events (6 days?) in 1628/29. During this four-year period the Ludlow Trained Band attended three general musters at Shrewsbury. There are no surviving borough accounts for 1629/30 and no record of training in those for 1630/31. Also, there are no muster book folios for those years, so recorded mustering resumes in 1631/32 with two events, and three in 1632/33. From October 1633 to October 1635, with 13 events over at least 14 days, mustering and training gained fresh impetus, but in 1635/36 only two events are recorded, both in the muster book, there being no surviving accounts. There are no muster folios for 1637-38, nor evidence of military activity in the accounts for 1636/37, and only two events are recorded in the 1637/38 accounts. During the Bishops’ Wars of 1639-40, King Charles I placed unprecedented demands on his ‘perfected’ militia by ordering that his armies should consist of enlisted trained bandsmen; in February 1639 300 were requested from Shropshire, whilst in March 1640 the county’s levy for 500 foot was to include a ‘good choice’ of trained soldiers. Whilst officially sanctioned, substitution – which allowed militiamen to procure untrained men in their stead – largely denied the king the

74 Order to muster Ludlow soldiers, 22 June 1635, LBR, SA, LB7/2231.
75 Boynton, in The Elizabethan Militia, p. 14, identified two forms of mustering: the general muster, a public inspection of all of a county’s forces, followed by training; and the special muster, a review of a company or smaller unit.
76 Bailiff’s Accounts 1625/26, LBR, SA, LB8/1/148, fol. 3.
77 Bailiff’s Accounts 1624/25-1639/40, LBR, SA, LB/8/1/145-60.
trained infantry he desired, nonetheless the increase in militia training which anticipated this call to arms is represented in the Ludlow record, with five or six events totalling in excess of ten days in 1638/39 (including general musters at Shrewsbury and in south Shropshire at Munslow) and four or more days in 1639/40.

Drill, according to the Privy Council’s directive of July 1626, was to be conducted ‘apart first, then by degrees in fyles, squadrons, whole companies and regiments’, and other contemporary military manuals similarly advocated training by progression.79 Following individual instruction, the ‘motions’ and ‘postures’ of weapon handling would be practised in files, then the files combined into squadron or company ranks to practise manoeuvres. Such methods would have allowed the Ludlow soldiers to exercise in file six deep and in squadron ranks four wide and six deep. The permanent presence of eight long-serving soldiers – four pikemen, four musketeers – suggests they acted in pairs as ‘leaders’ and ‘bringers up’ of each file, guiding their comrades during drill.80 Musketry was most economically practised making ‘false fires’, using sufficient powder to familiarize with the motions of loading and firing, but saving the full charge required to propel a musket ball.81 The government’s Instructions for Musters advocated competitive shooting at marks and repeated references in the borough accounts from 1622 onwards to the repair and setting up of butts raises the interesting possibility that live firing was undertaken at Ludlow on a fairly regular basis, perhaps even outside the recorded training events. A royal commission established in 1628 to encourage archery practise was short-lived, being revoked in 1631, and so it seems unlikely that in 1638 Ludlow’s corporation, otherwise parsimonious in military expenditure, would have sanctioned the seven shillings and six pence paid for making butts solely to promote the outmoded longbow.82 The butts were set up near to Ludlow Castle and it was the fortress’s large and mostly open outer bailey which was the probable location for much squadron and company training, as in 1635 when the corporation purchased a table and a canopy ‘for the lieutenants when they came to view the trained band on the castle green’.83

Recent research suggests that the average English militiaman trained for three or four days annually during King Charles I’s Personal Rule.84 Throughout the 16 years represented by the muster book, the Ludlow Trained Band compared favourably with that average, being mustered for at least four days in most years. Those local musters – as the drive for a ‘perfect’ militia nationally – mirrored periods of heightened international tension, with associated fears of invasion, consequent to the intermittent Thirty Years’ War in Europe from 1618 onwards.

80 Anon., Instructions for Musters and Arms (1623 and 1631), p. B3.
81 Ibid, no folio.
83 Bailiff’s Accounts 1634/35, LBR, SA, LB8/1/156, fol. 3.
84 Langelüddecke, ‘The chiefest strength and glory of this kingdom’, p. 1301.
Musters increased in 1625-27 during conflict with Spain and France, and again in 1628/29 when the Caroline government considered military intervention in Germany. In 1635 the training of Ludlow’s soldiers marked a renewed urgency in the reformed militia programme in response to fears of invasion, prompted by France’s increased involvement in the continental war and a shift in English diplomacy towards an anti-Habsburg alliance. In 1638-40 it was King Charles’s attempts to deploy an English army to suppress rebellion in Scotland that drove militia training in Shropshire, as elsewhere. Whilst Ludlow’s was a less than perfect militia, the squadron’s history demonstrates positive aspects of the early Stuart trained bands. Despite the problems and limitations of localised funding, sustained effort was made to improve both equipment and training, whilst Shropshire’s military organisation was, at the least, workable. Indeed, within two years of the last recorded inspection at Ludlow, the trained bands – including soldiers from the town – were mustered in the county’s defence for the first time, deployed by Shropshire’s Royalist leadership at the outbreak of the First English Civil War.