

A History of Devereux's Regiment

By Alan Turton

Nicholas Devereux was a member of an ancient Anglo-Irish branch of the famous mainland Devereux family and claimed he was the only male of that branch not 'tainted' by Catholicism. In the Irish rebellion of 1641 he appears to have served in the Government Army, possibly commanding local native levies. Eventually he fled to England with his wife, Bridget, and their young children, leaving behind an estate devastated by the rebellion.

In July 1642 Parliament began recruiting a field army to protect itself from the despotic Charles I and chose for its first Lord General, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. Nicholas Devereux enlisted into the regiment of his illustrious cousin and was commissioned Captain of one of the three companies of firelocks which formed part of the Lord General's Regiment. By 22nd August 1642 (the day King Charles raised his standard at Nottingham, effectively declaring war), Nicholas Devereux had recruited 90 volunteers into his company. The new army gradually left London and positioned itself in the South West Midlands, between the King's base at Shrewsbury and the Capital.

Sometime in mid-October there was an attempt to convert the three firelock companies into dragoons of which the army was drastically short. The young Scottish officer, John Middleton, was chosen to command the unit but, following the heavy losses at Edgehill, he was transferred to command Lord Fielding's cavalry regiment and by 22nd December the firelocks were reduced back into one company of the Lord General's Regiment.

Nicholas Devereux took up a new command in Colonel Thomas Essex's Regiment at Gloucester, possibly as first captain. By early December the regiment moved on Bristol to secure the second city of the kingdom and its Colonel, a man of unstable temperament, was made military governor. For the next three months the regiment formed the backbone of the Bristol garrison and with the appearance of Major General Sir William Waller in the West, provided him with his only reliable infantry for his attack on Malmesbury and his spectacular capture of a small Welsh Royalist army at Highnam House, near Gloucester. By the 15th April 1643 Devereux had resigned his command in Thomas Essex's Regiment and had become major to Col. Arthur Forbes' dragoon regiment which was based at Berkeley Castle, an outpost of the garrison of Gloucester.

When Bristol fell to King Charles on 27th July, the Berkeley troops were pulled out to re-enforce the defenders at Gloucester. During the siege of Gloucester through August and September of 1643 there are several mentions made of Devereux taking part in the defence of the city. After the successful lifting of the siege on 5th September 1643, Devereux received on the 12th a

commission as Colonel of Foot from the Lord General and he set about raising his regiment from the local area. The energetic young governor of Gloucester, Colonel Edward Massie, now went on the offensive and moved Devereux's new regiment to the old Bishop's Palace at Prestbury as a counter to the Royalist garrison at Sudeley Castle.

During the Spring of 1644, with Lord Stamford's Regiment and Devereux's, Massie made a series of lightning raids on Royalist outposts. The force was successful in taking Westbury-on-Severn, Newnham, Little Dean, Beverston Castle and the fortress town of Malmesbury on 25th May 1644. Devereux was made Governor of Malmesbury and his regiment became the garrison on 16th June 1644. From this time on, the regiment was supposed to be paid for by the County Committee of Wiltshire but, in Devereux's 'Remonstrance', he claims "that he raised a Regiment of Foot at his own charge in Wiltshire," and "was Ingenerer of Malmesbury and drew all the works himself." He also now had under him his own regiment of horse of horse and a company of dragoons.

From a surviving 'survey' of 10th July 1644 we have the following company commanders:

Colonel Nicholas Devereux	110 men
Lt Colonel Marmaduke Pudsey	79
Sgt Major George Fawkenor	110
Capt William More	76
Capt Nicholas More	36
Capt Humphry Dymocke	75
Capt Clement Ludford	67
Capt (Thomas?) Lawrence	54
Capt (Joseph?) Scarbrow	53
Capt (Stap?)	33

The regiment, at this time, had two commanded parties out. One serving under Alexander Popham and the other under Sir William Waller on the Cropredy Bridge campaign. About this date a major outpost was set up at the old manor at Great Chalfield. Initially, this was put under Capt Dymocke's command. The importance of this outpost grew as more and more Royalist garrisons were erected in the vicinity, particularly at Devizes. As a result, Lt Colonel Pudsey took over command.

Throughout the remaining months of 1644 and the following year, Devereux's hung on to their two main garrisons, despite visitations of whole Royalist armies on the county. Their numbers, however, were too few to hold all the outposts. Pinnel House, near Calne, surrendered on 28th

December 1644, and Rowdon House near Chippenham was captured after siege in February 1645. Lacock House was also temporarily held and then evacuated at the same time.

In the summer of 1645, Sir Thomas Fairfax entered Wiltshire at the head of the victorious New Model Army, having taken the Royalist fortlet at Highworth Church. He requested Nicholas Devereux to re-garrison the fortlet for Parliament. This request was carried out immediately and within a week, had beat off an attack from the Farringdon garrison, a force with whom the Regiment were to cross swords many times in the coming months. In September 1645 the New Model Army was again back in Wiltshire to mop up remaining enemy garrisons. Devereux's, supported by Pickering's, re-captured Lacock House, whilst the main army besieged and took Devizes Castle. This effectively cleared Wiltshire of Royalists who were then limited to raids from Farringdon and Oxford. To counter these threats, outposts were set up at Lechlade and Marlborough. Although Capt William Moore defeated a large Royalist force in the water meadows outside Lechlade, Devereux himself was nearly captured at Marlborough in January 1646.

After March 1646, even these raids finished and elements from Devereux's garrisons were ordered to the sieges of Farringdon and Radcot House which surrendered with the Royalist capital of Oxford in June 1646. This virtually brought an end to the First Civil War and in September 1646 Parliament decreed that the Wiltshire garrisons should be stood down and paid off. It appears that 1st October 1646 marks the disbanding of Devereux's Regiment as such, although there is evidence that some of the officers at least served on in different units in Ireland and a number of men transferred to New Model units such as Pride's Regiment.

Nicholas Devereux retired to Westminster with his family. He spent the next nine years or so trying to get back some of the £4,374 owed to him by Parliament. At the same time he was trying, without success, to get a post in Ireland so that he could rebuild his home at Balinmagir, near Wexford. He died in London in 1665.