Portsmouth 18 April 1804

Private

My Lord

In answer to your Lordship’s letter of the 16th I have only to assure you that I shall ever be happy to comply with any wish of your Lordship’s even in giving my opinion (such as it is) confidentially, upon the subject of the Volunteer, I have however before made your Lordship aware that my original intention in interesting myself about the Volunteers was honourably and fairly to meet the wishes of Government with that zeal which I pray God may never forsake me. But having ultimately found that I could no longer interfere, and at the same time preserve my Character and feelings, I have naturally shewn a desire to withdraw myself, except in Cases where by the situation I have the honor to hold under His Majesty, I judge it right not to suffer trespasses that would attach blame to me as an Officer. I have experienced great ingratitude from the Portsmouth Heroes, both White and Black belts, and I am quite convinced the same fate would have awaited the ablest officer, who had dared to oppose the Salvation of the Country to their almost universal Favor for Dirty Animosity.

I am really disposed to recommend your Lordship not to make any alteration, but to let the system rest as it was originally agreed upon. If they do not chuse to attend it cannot be helped, and I don’t think they would do so in a much greater degree if an alteration was to take place. The novelty is gone by. As to the Four Companies joining Major Garrett at Hilsea, when their services are actually called for – it would be uncandid my Lord not to acknowledge that upon such as occasion I should not be very anxious in searching for the means of accommodating People who have behaved so very ill as they all have done.

The attendance of the whole of them at exercise at present I am told is shameful, but strictly speaking I do not think it signifies very much. The nature of their duty in Portsmouth in the event of Invasion would not require high disciplined Troops, as I am disposed to think that at such an eventful period they might be prevailed upon to pay a little more respect to their Duty.

The respect I entertain for your Lordship induces me anxiously to hope that you will no longer suffer yourself to be annoyed from this quarter. In my own person, finding that the Public could not in any way be made to benefit by my labours and vexations, I have decidedly adopted that line of conduct.

I am my lord with greatest respect

Your obliged and faithful servant

John Whitelocke, Major General

Right Honorable Lord Bolton