Widley House near Porstmouth

25 August 1803

My Lord,

I am really very unequal to the task of writing letters of any kind just now, but on looking over those I have the honor to receive a few days ago from your Lordship, I find it necessary to explain that my present unhappy situation, in consequence of the loss I have sustained in my family has alone prevented my paying due attention to them. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the People on the Gosport side of the Water to be of much use to your Lordship in the formation of the Volunteer Companies there. I have however requested Lord Charles Somerset to look at and encourage them as they assemble. Your Lordship fortunately does not want much information to enable you to get at the views of all of them. If the plan of naming Lieutenant Colonel Duke, etc, to command the whole succeeds all will go well, but if it becomes necessary in failure of that, to name any of the Inhabitants to be Field Offciers, the Corps in my opinion from which so much may now be expected, will not longer be efficient, and I should hope that the knowledge which His Majesty’s Ministers must have of the former spirit that existed here about, will induce them to adopt measure tho perhaps not exactly suited to the general purposes of Volunteering, as will secure three thousand Men for the Defence of the Country. The Company at Portsmouth No. 9 respecting which your Lordship enquires is reserved for Mr Matthew White who act at present as a Volunteer Major of Brigade and in that Capacity is very useful and indeed indispensably necessary to communicate between the Officers Commanding at Portsmouth and the respective Companies. According to the Rank he held in the last Volunteer Corps he would be the Ninth Captain now, but it may be as well that he should be named Major of Brigade to the Volunteers of the Island of Portsea and Gosport. The People of the Dockyard will of course come forward in the event of serious alarmm but Sir Charles Saxton is not unknown to your Lordship, and you will not therefore wonder that I know nothing more about them. The Victualling Office People are zealous and regularly exercised at the great Guns, the look forward to be Commanded by Captain Deacon of the Royal Navy. There numbers about 330, I lament very much that there should be any delay about arming such of the People as are to be tained to small Arms.

I am My Lord,

Etc etc

John Whitelocke