Hackwood Park

11 February 1804

Sir

I have received the Packet which you have sent to me and in order to save you and myself trouble, I shall take the enclosures one by one and make a very short comment on each which will convey the shortest and at the same time the most complete in my power to make.

Upon No.1 I have first to observe that this is the first moment in which I ever heard of the Sentiments of the Portsea Officers either in respect to their wishes or apprehensions, I flatter myself that my conduct might have invited an immediate communication to me of both with perfect assurance that I should have been ready to have listened satisfactorily to any right and reasonable proposition.

I must however do them the justice to remark that their desire was for a communication to me which however was not made and whatever measures therefore was taken in consequences of it was wholly without my participation or my being honoured with any notice at all upon the subject. I think it necessary to declare here once for all that I have not nor ever had any view of personal [blank] either in way of Compliment or of patronage. I had no object of the kind and I had a right to suppose that credit might have been given me on that head without it being necessary to have recourse to disrespect for the station in which His Majesty had been graciously pleased to place me as His Lieutenant in this County it is my bounden duty to preserve the respect which is due to that situation as well as to submit to the trouble and labour which the employment at this period unavoidably brings upon me and I have no power to wave that interference or mediation which are made essential duties of the Office, I shall only in this point add that in execution of these duties I can most conscientiously declare my entire freedom from all motives but the truest sense of propriety with respect to any measure itself or to due attention to any of the Parties to be affected by it, I am very far from having to offer any objection to the communication in No. 2 to His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland, it is not necessary for me to call in question the propriety of the opinion or the respect perfectly due to His Royal Highness to justify my protest against any measure of that kind with total concealment of it from the Lord Lieutenant to whom it especially belongs to make arrangements with Government upon the Establishment of Volunteer Corps and upon the appointment of Officers of every description to them. The example of this had been set in the recommendation of Lieutenant Colonel Duke. I think it proper here to repeat what I mentioned in my last letter that at the time of making the proposition of the plan there was an idea of appointing some gentlemen of the place Field Officers with the rank of Major, but that a superior Officer of the Line at the head of the whole. The idea of that kind was confirmed by what you said at the time to Major Garrett. It is true that this part of the [blank] was afterwards in representations to me given up but I never heard of any arrangement for the others from the Line in their stead. I have already said that the appointment of an Inspecting Field Officer had superseded the necessity and indeed the thought of having other Field Officers as he was to be with the assistant of an Adjutant the Superintending Adviser in regard to Drills and exercise though not the Commander of the Force.

Upon the statement No. 3 that I had declared an opinion that the appointment of Field Officers from the Line was contrary to the general wishes and to the original intention of the Volunteers, I must beg leave to observe that I believe I stated it was not appearing to be the General wish which I had every reason to suppose from my receiving no suggestions of the kind and as to the intentions of the Volunteers I really cannot pretend to say what the intentions of these Gentlemen who sign the Papers enclosed to me were because I am not made acquainted with them bit I am fully authorized in saying that it was not the General intention as I first conceived and I have had no reason since to alter my opinion, I cannot pretend to say who made them understand that Field Officers of the line were always intended but I am sure that I did not.

But do their wishes or intentions now or then constitute any satisfactory Answer to my objection that either of them were communicated to me with any hint of a desire that I would recommend such a measure, and I cannot but remark as not a little strange and inconsistent with this satisfaction in the Command of Field Officers that after they appear to have been appointed without my knowledge the returns of each Company were made by the Captains of them and all applications came from them respectively without any notice to me of a Field Officer Commandant.

In respect to No. 4 and 5 I have only here refer to what I have said above. That I have not made the liking or the disliking of the measure an essential ground of my statement, but I do most assuredly know since I heard of the measure that it was not unanimously satisfactory and I will add that there is no impropriety in a temperate remonstrance against such a measure if not agreed to by any of the Officers of any of the Companies, nor do I conceive that it could be of force to bind those who did not agree to it; And indeed I myself am fair to own that I consider the whole measure, as it has been effected totally irregular and to which it is impossible for me to subscribe with an regard to my duty or to the situation I hold, I cannot close my remarks on this part of the subject without expressing great concern at the nature of the complaint which Colonel Mannooch has thought fit to make against Captain Greetham with whom I have never been personally acquainted but of whom I have received from the best quarters assurances of his Character and General line of conduct being repugnant to my idea of the want of zeal or any symptom of indifference in a cause which I fully believe him to have no mark at least as any of those who make the greatest professions. I am confident that Colonel Mannooch must have mistaken him and I hoped by what I have literary heard that Colonel Mannooch has been himself satisfied on that head. I am confident that no relaxation of duty was intended and no action of disrespect to Colonel Mannooch even if in conversation upon the nature of the Appointment of an Inspecting Field Officer, he may have said that he did not conceive him to be the Commander of the Volunteers. The distinction is clear and the mere mention of an opinion surely not offensive. But I am suprized to find by the contents of No. 6 that it has been thought necessary to state what passed upon the desire of Captain Garrett etc to resign as if there had arisen any thing to contradict the sincerity of those Gentlemen who undoubtedly I think had great merit if they were discontented with the measure about Field Officers or any other to seek to prevent all disturbance or ill effect by their retreat. I solemnly declare that they made no sort of complaint to me and I should not I daresay have heard a word from them upon the very matters on which however they might have strongly felt uneasiness, if I had not by Mr Yorke’s advice called upon them for information of which I apprized you before I applied to them. Nothing which I have heard from them contradicts the spirit of the proposition found in No. 6. On the contrary they have been strongly repeated to me, but I confess that I have urgently requested them not to resign, because I know well that the personal co-operation of such Gentlemen as those must be of credit and use to the cause, and that most probably notwithstanding their real desire to the contrary their Companies would be lost to the service; I have not thought their wish unreasonable that they who would rather remain as independent Companies and drill together with every readiness at the same time to act with the whole on service or on any emergency might be indulged in this desire. I know not indeed where is the power to force them into Battalion before the time of actual service; and although from my heart I am a decided friend to previous unions as tending to efficiency of strength and discipline, I cannot and must not forget the real nature and extent of the Law and of the system, and resolve against inclination of the Parties to attempt a sort of compulsion, which I have not right to desire and no power to accomplish. This is the situation in which these Gentlemen now stand, and I wait for instructions, how I am to proceed, nothing can exceed my anxiety to restore every thing to harmony and good order, and I shall not hesitate to make all possible advanced steps consistent with any decent regard to my duty and my station towards them. If this condition is not allowed to be, I shall with perfect readiness surrender my trust into the hands from which I received it, with every cordial wish for better success under other management that has in this instance attended it under mine.

I read with no small degree of suprize the letter from the Mayor and Magistrates of Portsmouth to you in approbation of your conduct in the appointment of Field Officers, because I am satisfied that they were not aware of what that conduct was which they so much commend. Are they prepared to say, that, even if the matter was as they represent (which I however cannot allow) the unanimous wish of the Inhabitants to have Field Officers from the Line, this arrangement was to be conducted by means totally different from those established by the Legislature, and directed by the King? And it is in obedience to the Law and in Duty to His Majesty, that I protest against the proceedings.

If in any meeting, in consequence of what passed in the Town Hall of Portsmouth, the arrangement was declared to be, the formation of Battalions under Field Officers of the Line in addition to one Field Officer who was to superintend the whole, I must declare my total dissent to such an interpretation and consequent transaction. I should not have kept good faith, if I had knowingly allowed such a proposition to be made, and I was well aware, that several persons agreed with difficulty to the plan of one Field Officer at the Head; and never would have agreed to a General plan for throwing the Companies into Battalions under the Command of separate Field Officers of the Line, Whatever respect therefore I may be desirous of shewing as I really am to the Mayor and Magistrates of Portsmouth I must wait the intended effect of their representation. I well remember that communication of the resolution proceeding the Meeting at the Town Hall, but I also well remember and so must you, that no stipulation was made by me of the situation of Officers who might be recommended under the Chieft Field Officer of the Line; Before we went to the Town Hall, you as well as I had an idea of two or three Gentlemen connected with the place being appointed.

I certainly afterwards, as I have repeatedly said, did give up that idea in order to remove all possibility of jealousy and uneasiness in any of the parties composing the accordant whole. And it is therefore unnecessary to dwell upon that, or indeed to add more than a few words in order to mark, which I think it fair and candid to do, my acknowledged idea, that by more than accident, I was kept in ignorance of the appointment of these Field Officers, when I wrote to you with enquiry about the appearance of Major Maxwell’s name in the gazette as appointed to command the Volunteers at Portsmouth upon permanent duty or any offer of it. I perhaps weakly, concluded that the whole was a mistake, and the rather, because you did not then think fit to say on word to me about the wish, or opinion, or expediency in favour of such appointment, of which you must have known me to be ignorant. From that hour I never heard of Major Maxwell in any token of command. I had never in any way heard of Major Carter, till his Name was returned to me a short time since by the Inspecting Field Officer.

I have no objection to Major Maxwell or to Major Carter from any personal feelings, Had the situation been open to my recommendation, I had no wish to name any officer from my own [blank] or connection in preference to them, yet I must to preserve consistent fairness throughout, acknowledge, that I should hesitate about Major Carter as so immediately coming under the very description declared to be objectionable from the apprehension of jealousy and party spirit. Because he is in fact an Inhabitant of Portsmouth and nearly connected with a leading interest in the Corporation who recommended the measure. I should be truly sorry (but I cannot help it) if this doubt should be misconstrued into any idea of my having a bias of any sort upon my mind for or against any thing like any party in these misunderstandings. It is my very total exemption from it which suggests this as a point of delicacy under such circumstances as have been represented to which I may add the sacrifice of these Gentlemen who in the last War commanded Corps with Field Officer Rank and who in the renewal of hostilities were foremost beyond all others in the offers of honourable and expensive service, I have thus gone through the list of Papers, which you have sent to me with such observations as should render it unnecessary for me to say more upon the subject, but I must obtrude one to two words upon some points in your letter. I have opposed no opinion of any person against yours in any case whatever, unless my own had led the way to it and the instance I have mentioned I must differ with you as I do most decidedly in your estimation of the zeal and public spirit of Persons to who you suppose me partially to listen. I have not scrupled to state the point in your public conduct in which I feel myself in duty bound officially to find a plan in respect to the propriety of arrangements without communication for the Volunteers of Portsmouth and Portsea. If the measure was under such circumstances approved by Government it ought to create my wonder that it did not appear to be known to the Secretary of State but I cannot hesitate to say that if such was the case it behoves me to doubly to be assured that I ought to remain in the situation in which I must be so degradingly placed. The letters which you have enclosed especially that from the Mayor and Magistrates do pointedly compliment you as the author of the measure, which I never called offensive or ill judged (as an abstract measure respecting my interference or the tending of it for improvement, but I did and do call it an irregular measure and not to be obtruded by indirect means upon any of the Volunteers. I have answered the point respecting the reasons assigned to the Officers for their wish of resignations. In regard to their continuance as a part of the Military Force of the Garrison of Portsmouth I must suppose you will accompany your objections with some charge against them of disloyalty or inefficiency which without proof I own I cannot believe to be justly imputable to them. You must have known by experience whether I was disposed to place confidence in one of His Majesty’s General Officers as I certainly was in you and feeling always how absurd it would be for me to pretend a superiority of judgement in cases of military arrangement I always sought the aid of advice and suggestion and I never could have been induced to cavil at any trifling omission of communication but in this case I have to complain of total and continued disregard of my Official station and Duty which I do not think myself at liberty from my personal indifference about the matter to acquiesce.