

Members of the Order of Saint Lazarus protecting the French Royal Household

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Abstract

A number of admissions to the Order of Saint Lazarus initiated their military or political careers serving the French royal household as members of the *Maison Militaire du Roi de France*.

Introduction

During the *ancien régime*, the French royal household was serviced by a military division known as the *Maison Militaire du Roi de France*. Throughout the 17th-18th centuries, several cavalry and infantry units served as the sovereign's personal guard in peace and during military campaigns. On the battlefield, the military household fought around the king and the royal standard if the sovereign was present. While a military household had been introduced during the mid-15th century – the *Garde Écossaise* founded in 1418, the term *maison militaire du roi* only came into usage after 1671. They were in 1761 divided into the *garde du dedans* [inside the Louvre] made up of the four companies of the *Gardes-du-Corps du Roi*, including the original *Compagnie Ecossoise*, the *Cent-Suisses de la Garde*, the *Gardes de la Porte ordinaires*, and the *Gardes de la prévôté de l'Hôtel du Roi*; and the *garde du dehors* [outside the Louvre] made up of the *Compagnie des Gendarmes de la Garde*, the *Compagnie des Chevaux-Légers de la Garde*, the two *Compagnies des Mousquetaires du Roi*, the *Compagnie de Grenadière à cheval*, and the *Gardes-Françoises & Gardes-Suisses*. The rank and file to many of the different units making up the *Maison Militaire du Roi* were made up from commoners, with officer ranks being occupied by gentlemen with a nobility background. Admission to two units – the *Gardes-du-Corps du Roi* and the *Mousquetaires du Roi* – were however solely limited to gentlemen with

appropriate social backgrounds.¹ Several individuals serving in these latter two units or as officers in the other units of the *Maison Militaire du Roi* were to be eventually admitted to the *Les Ordres Royaux, Militaires et Hospitaliers de Notre-Dame du Mont-Carmel et de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem Réunis*. Some went on to have distinguished careers within and outside their corps of choice.²

Gardes-du-Corps du Roi de France

The *Gardes-du-Corps* served as the senior formation within the *Maison militaire du Roi de France*. The corps was responsible to serve as personal bodyguards to the sovereign when he was resident in the royal palaces. In 1761, the corps was made up of four *companies*, each of about 336 men organized into six brigades. Each company fell under the overall responsibility of a captain. Three brigades were commanded by three lieutenants, the other by three 2nd Lieutenants [ensigns]. Other officers assigned to each company included 12 brigadiers,



¹ *État Militaire de France pour l'année 1761*. (Paris: Guillyn, 1761), pp.151-170. cf. https://books.google.com.mt/books?id=U98xAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA383&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false

² A. de Marsy. *Liste des Chevaliers de l'Ordre de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem et de Notre-Dame du Mont-Carmel de 1610 à 1736*. (Paris: J.-B. Dumoulin, 1875), +89pp.; H.M. de Langle and J.L. Treouret de Kerstrat. *Les Ordres de Saint Lazare de Jerusalem & De Notre Dame du Mont Carmel aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*. (Paris: Publications LMTK, 1992), +442pp.

12 sub-brigadiers, and 6 standard-bearers. There were in addition 15 service-exempted officers in each company.³



Uniform of the *Garde du Corps du Roi*⁴

At least 37 individuals recruited in the *Gardes-du-Corps du Roi* have been identified as having been admitted members of the united Orders of Our Lady of Notre Dame and St Lazarus during the period 1608-1788. These included a number of officers such as commander [x1], and aide-major [x2], lieutenants [x4], sub-lieutenant [x1], brigadiers [x4 individuals], sub-brigadiers [x3], standard-bearers [x2], and gendarme or

³ *État Militaire de France pour l'année 1761, op. cit.*, p.152.

⁴ *Uniformes Militaires des troupes Française et Étrangères de l'Infanterie, Cavalerie, Dragons et Husards sous le regne de Louis XVI.* (Paris: Onsroy, 1780), plate 127. Cf. <http://visualiseur.bnf.fr/CadresFenetre?O=IFN-8426913&I=193&M=chemindefer>

men-at-arms [x4].⁵ The most noteworthy of the corps members to be admitted to the united Orders were members of the de NÉRESTANG family who were appointed Grand Masters of the joined Orders after these were instituted by Henri IV in 1608.

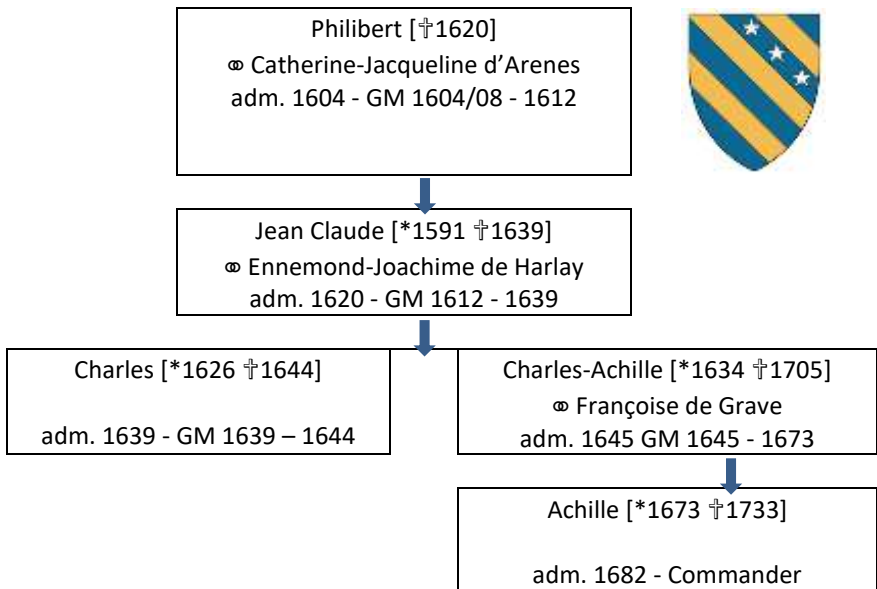
The Philibert Marquis de NÉRESTANG, Baron de Saint-Didier [†16/08/1620], was a brilliant soldier who had distinguished himself in the Wars of Religion. He originally served in the army at the time of Charles IX. On the 6 March, 1597, he raised an infantry regiment under his name (eventually Bourbonnois) which he commanded that same year during the siege of Amiens, and the following year, 1598, at the Battle of Picardy until peace was concluded on May 2, his regiment being placed on reserve. Philibert re-established his Regiment on the 3 April, 1600, to participate in the Henri IV's against Savoy. The regiment was disbanded by order of January 17, 1601, after peace following the War against the Duke of Savoy to be re-established by ordinance of the 31 May, 1602. In 1604, he was appointed by Henri IV to the office of Grand Master to the Order of Saint Lazarus, and in February, 1608, to the office of Grand Master to the newly created Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. He re-established his Regiment through a new commission dated 16 February, 1610, but resigned in 25 February, 1611, to join the *Garde Écossaise du Roi*. In July, 1612, he resigned the post of Grand Master of the joined Orders. Appointed Maréchal de Camp on 14 August, 1615, he served in the Picardy army during the siege of Clermont in Beauvoisis. In 1620, acting as field marshal in the army commanded by the King in 1620, he distinguished himself during the attack on the town of Pont-de-Cé, during which battle he received a mortal wound.⁶

Philibert's appointment as Grand Master to the joined Orders of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and of Saint Lazarus was to initiate a dynastic succession with members of the Nérestang family occupying the post of Grand Master for about seven decades. Philibert's son and successor to the post of Grand Master of the joined Orders, Claude de NÉRESTANG,

⁵ A. de Marsy, *op. cit.*; H.M. de Langle and J.L. Treourret de Kerstrat, *op. cit.*

⁶ M. Pinard. *Chronologie historique-militaire*. (Paris: C. Herissant, 1763).

also served as a captain in the *Garde Écossaise du Roi*. He was present with his father during the battle at Pont-de-Cé (1620), and served in the sieges at Saint-Jean d'Angely, Clerac and de Montauban (1621). He raised an infantry regiment through commission dated 3 March, 1622, participating in the sieges of Saint-Antonin and de Montpellier. He was also present in the sieges of La Rochelle (1627-28), Privas and d'Alais (1628), and Cazal (1630). He was killed during the siege of Turin on 2 August, 1639.⁷ After his death, the post of Grand Master of the joined Orders was successively occupied by his two sons, Charles and Charles-Achille. His grandson, Achille de NÉRESTANG, Duke of Gadaigne, served as Camp Master of the calvary and brigadier of the *Compagnie des Gendarmes de la Garde du Roi*. He was appointed commander to the Order's Commandery of Saint-Thomas de Fontenay-le-Comte in Poitou.⁸



NÉRESTANG Family Genealogy

⁷ M. Pinard, *op. cit.*, pp.123-124

⁸ H.M. de Langle and J.L. Treouret de Kerstrat, *op. cit.*, pp.97, 103, 106 and 149.



Philibert & Claude de NÉRÉSTANG

Other noteworthy members of the joined Orders who served in the *Gardes-du-Corps du Roi* include:⁹

- ✱ Robert de Bragelonne [adm. 1658], a lieutenant in the *Gardes-du-Corps*, was appointed Commander of the Order's Commandery of Fontenay-le-Comte. During the ceremony related to the feast day of Saint Lazarus, de Bragelonne acted disrespectfully towards the Grand Master. On the 27 December, a Chapter General was called to request him to justify his conduct, but the Grand Master withdrew his complaint.
- ✱ Louis-Dominique Cambis [adm. 1722] served initially as a lieutenant of the *Gardes-du-Corps du Roi*, eventually as *Maréchal de camp* and governor of Sisteron. He was appointed ambassador to England. He was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Saint-Louis and made Chevalier of Saint-Esprit.

⁹ H.M. de Langle and J.L. Treourret de Kerstrat, *op. cit.*, pp.108, 224.

Mousquetaires de la Garde du Roi de France

The *Mousquetaires de la Maison Militaire du Roi de France* were founded in 1622 by Louis XIII, originally as a light cavalry carrying muskets. They eventually assumed both a light cavalry and an infantry role protecting the sovereign when outside the royal residencies. A second company was organized by Louis XIV in 1661 who assumed ownership of the bodyguard corps of the Chief Minister Cardinal Mazarin. The first original company was given the name of *Mousquetaires gris*, the second *Mousquetaires noirs* based on the colour of the horses they rode. Each company in 1761 was composed of a captain lieutenant, an infantry sub-lieutenant, two 2nd lieutenants, 2 cavalry sub-lieutenant [*coronettes*], 10 *Maréchal de logis*, including 2 aides-major, 4 brigadiers, 18 sub-brigadiers, including 12 sub-aides-major, 1 flag-bearer, 1 standard-bearer, and 200 musketeers. The first company was quartered at number 2, Rue du Bac, Fauxbourg Saint-Germain in Paris; the second was quartered in its own hotel in Rue de Charenton, Faubourg Saint-Antoine in Paris.¹⁰ The corps were disbanded by Louis XVI in 1776 because of budgetary reasons. They were reformed again during the Bourbon Restoration in 1814, but only survived two years.¹¹

This corps has been popularized through the literary works by the 19th-century novelist Alexander Dumas – *The Three Musketeers*, *Twenty Years After*, and *The Vicomte de Bragelonne: Ten Years Later*, which included the sub-novel *The Man in the Iron Mask*. Dumas was inspired to create these literary works from the 1700-work of past musketeer Gatien de Courtiz de Sandras entitled *Memoires de Mr d'Artagnan: capitaine lieutenant de la premiere compagnie des mousquetaires du roi, contenant quantité de choses particulieres et secrettes qui se sont passées sous le regne de Louis le Gran* [Pierre Marteau, Cologne, 1701].¹²

¹⁰ *État Militaire de France pour l'année 1761, op. cit.*, p.167.

¹¹ R. Chartrand. *French Musketeer 1622-1775*. (Oxford: Osprey, 2013).

¹² G. de Courtiz de Sandras. *Memoires de Mr d'Artagnan: capitaine lieutenant de la premiere compagnie des mousquetaires du roi, contenant quantité de*



Mousquetaires gris



Mousquetaires noirs

17th-century Uniform and Standards of the *Mousquetaires du Roi* ¹³

choses particulieres et secrettes qui se sont passées sous le regne de Louis le Gran. (Cologne: P. Marteau, 1701), 3 vols.

The work purports to be the biography of musketeer Charles Ogier de Batz de Castlemore, Comte d'Artagnan [*1610/1 †1673], son of Bertrand de Batz de Castlemore and Françoise de Montesquiou. Charles Ogier married Anne-Charlotte de Channlecy and had two sons. His two other brothers also served as musketeers. None of these d'Artagnan family members had any connection with the joined Orders of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and of Saint Lazarus; however, two descendants, Seigneur d'Artaignan of the Fezensac-Montesquiou branch of the family, Paul de Fezensac-Montesquiou, Comte d'Artaignan [adm. 1779] and Anne-Pierre de Fezensac-Montesquiou, Seigneur d'Artaignan [adm. 1775], were admitted members to the Order.

¹³ A. de Marbot and J.E. Dunoyer de Noirmont. *Costumes militaires français depuis l'organisation des premières troupes régulières en 1439 jusqu'en 1789.* (Paris: Clément, n/d - 1830-1860).

There were 61 individuals who served as musketeers who were admitted to the united Orders of Our Lady of Notre Dame and St Lazarus during the period 1681-1744. Twenty-two are known to have served in the *Mousquetaires gris* company and 12 in the *Mousquetaires noirs*. The company where the remainder served is not indicated. These included several officers such as commander [x1], 2nd lieutenant [x1], brigadier [x2], sub-brigadiers [x4]. Two other musketeers are simply noted as having served as officers.¹⁴

A number of musketeers served the joined Orders in some official capacity. Three of these served as commanders to the Orders' holdings – Joseph de Ladormat [adm. 1690] as Commander of Saint-Quentin in Bourgogne; Pierre-Antoine-Gabriel de Chevreau de Saint-Romain [adm. 1699] of Saint-Sabastian de Sommerves; and Frix de Bassignau [adm. 1729] of Agen in Bordeaux. Two musketeers established hereditary commanderies – Claude La Tourteliere des Antes [adm. 1700] and Nicolas Olivier [adm. 1711]. Gabriel-Anne de Cosnac [adm. 1730] served as provost master of ceremonies of the Order. Another noteworthy member of the joined Orders who served in the *Mousquetaires de la Garde du Roi* was François-Claude-Jérôme de Granouski [adm. 1699 †1735], of Polish origin, joined the *Mousquetaires gris* company, but eventually, in 1717, obtained a commission in a regiment of dragoons and, a year later, was appointed a major-general in the foreign troop forces of the army of the King of Poland.¹⁵

Other units of the *Maison Militaire du Roi*

While the rank and file to many of the other different units making up the *Maison Militaire du Roi* were made up from commoners, officer ranks were occupied by gentlemen with a nobility background. This made them eligible for admission to the joined Orders of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St Lazarus. Forty-eight members of the joined Orders during the period 1610-1779 saw service in the *Gardes-Françoises* in various

¹⁴ A. de Marsy, *op. cit.*; H.M. de Langle and J.L. Treourret de Kerstrat, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ H.M. de Langle and J.L. Treourret de Kerstrat, *op. cit.*, pp. 168, 178, 179, 191, 247 and 250.

ranks - captain [x11 individuals], major [x1], aide-major [x2], lieutenant [x16], sub-lieutenant [x7], *Maréchal de camp* [x1], ensign [6], officer [x3], and one flag-bearer. Two members of the Order served in the *Gardes-Suisses* [captain and lieutenant]; eight members had served in the *Compagnie des Chevaux-Légers de la Garde*, including a coronette, a *Maréchal de camp* and two captains; and five members served in the *Compagnie des Gendarmes de la Garde* [3 captains, 1 brigadier and 1 major]. Some of these officers were given the responsibility of managing varying commanderies belonging to the Order, including the Commandery of Aigrefeuille [Pierre-François de Hardaz d'Hauteville adm. 1706; of Avesne [Jacques des Nau de Cordais adm. 1681; Saint-Thomas de Fontenay-le-Comte [Achille de Nérestang adm. 1682]; and administrators of the magistral commandery of Boigny [François de Huguet de Semonville adm. 1668 and André Louis de Sinety adm. 1730].¹⁶

Conclusion

It would appear that a significant proportion of gentlemen with a nobility background initiated their military or political careers by joining various military units serving the French royal household as the *Maison Militaire du Roi de France*. This service brought many of these to the attention of their leaders or the King himself leading to their being given formal commissions to lead other military divisions. Others were given governorship or ambassadorial posts in the service of the king. A number were rewarded by admission to the *Ordres Royaux, Militaires et Hospitaliers de Notre-Dame du Mont-Carmel et de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem Réunis*, with some being assigned commanderies belonging to the Order.

¹⁶ A. de Marsy, *op. cit.*; H.M. de Langle and J.L. Treouret de Kerstrat, *op. cit.*