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Sustaining Britain's First 'Citizen Army': the Creation and Evolution of Reinforcement Policy for Kitchener's New Armies, 1914-1916

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ABSTRACT

Expansion of the British Army through Lord Kitchener's New Armies has dominated the historiography of the First World War, generating a substantial amount of work on local, regional, and national recruitment. Though important, it has drawn attention away from Kitchener's efforts to create a reinforcement system capable of sustaining it. Therefore, this article will redress this imbalance by exploring the creation and evolution of reinforcement policy for Kitchener's New Armies between 1914 and 1916. It will demonstrate that the reinforcement system underwent a chaotic expansion and, overall, could not meet the demands of industrial warfare.

Lord Kitchener's decision to ignore the Territorial Force (TF) and expand the British Army through the New Armies in August 1914 has been the subject of extensive research, with historians focusing on how Britain's first 'Citizen Army' was created. Peter Simkins' seminal work remains the foremost social history of recruitment for the United Kingdom, demonstrating the near collapse of War Office recruitment machinery and the immense level of public support needed to continue the expansion of the British Army.¹ Subsequent historians have narrowed their focus onto specific localities and investigated the local, regional, and national responses to war and recruitment, as part of a growing 'nation in arms'.² This research has though

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¹Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies, 1914-1916*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

²Ian F. W. Beckett, 'The Nation in Arms, 1914-18', in Ian F. W. Beckett and Keith Simpson (eds), *A Nation in Arms: a social study of the British army in the First World War*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 1-36; John Beckett, 'Patriotism in Nottinghamshire: Challenging the Unconvinced, 1914-1917', *Midland History*, Vol.

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concentrated on the creation of the New Armies and overlooked how Kitchener attempted to create a reinforcement system. Although Alison Hine's recent research has considered how Kitchener and the War Office responded to the problem of reinforcing the British Army during industrial warfare, it remains a relatively unexplored topic.³ This is critical, as a robust reinforcement policy capable of supplying timely, trained reinforcements, was vital for maintaining the strength of the British Army. Without it, it would have been impossible to sustain successive British offensives from 1915 and, specifically, the quasi-strategy of attrition adopted by the Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Douglas Haig, from the summer of 1916.

Thus, the aim of this article is to assess how Kitchener and the War Office attempted to create a reinforcement policy and system that was capable of sustaining the New Armies overseas. Specifically, the analysis will focus upon the provision of other ranks for infantry battalions, as they suffered the bulk of casualties. Officers do not feature within this study as the required documentation needed to reconstruct this, the Military Secretary's papers, were destroyed in 1941. Nevertheless, this analysis will demonstrate that the reforms implemented between 1914 and 1916 were haphazard and short-sighted, which failed to create a system capable of supplying the necessary reinforcements. This stands in contrast to Hine's interpretation, which portrays the development of reinforcement policy as a relatively steady process that obtained greater efficiency. Whilst it could not resolve the overarching problem of manpower, the changes implemented demonstrated a continued willingness to adapt in light of experience.⁴ Yet, it will become clear that the reinforcement system, though affected by the availability of manpower, was simply incapable of meeting the demands of

39, Iss. 2 (2014), pp. 185-201; Timothy Bowman, William Butler and Michael Wheatley, *The Disparity of Sacrifice: Irish Recruitment to the British Armed Forces, 1914-1918*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020); Clive Hughes, 'The New Armies', in Ian F. W. Beckett and Keith Simson (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A social study of the British Army in the First World War*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 99-126; Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the War in Britain and Ireland*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Edward M. Spiers, 'Voluntary Recruiting in Yorkshire, 1914-1915', *Northern History*, Vol. 52, Iss. 2 (2015), pp. 295-313; Patrick Watt, 'Manpower, Myth and Memory: Analysing Scotland's Military Contribution to the Great War', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, Vol. 39, Iss. 1 (2019), pp. 75-100; Bonnie J. White, 'Volunteerism and Early Recruitment in Devonshire, August 1914 - December 1915', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 53, Iss. 3 (2009), pp. 641-666; Derek Rutherford Young, 'Voluntary Recruitment in Scotland, 1914-1916' (PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2001).

³Alison Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies: The Replacement of British Infantry Casualties on the Western Front, 1916-1919*, (Warwick: Helion and Company, 2018).

⁴*Ibid.*; pp. 89, p. 142, p. 294 & p. 297.

industrial warfare until 1916 once conscription and the Training Reserve had been introduced. Furthermore, this article will expand our historical understanding of how the distinctive image of New Army units, framed within Peter Simkins' 'Four Armies' concept, began to break down.⁵ The historiography correctly notes the demise of separate local military identities, particularly within 'Pals' Battalions, after the introduction of conscription and the extensive casualties suffered at the Somme. However, it is evident upon closer analysis that this process began in 1915, once New Army battalions were deployed overseas and received reinforcements from the reserve.⁶

Despite the small size of the British Army upon the outbreak of war, pre-war military reform and planning had already considered the need to provide reinforcements to an expeditionary force. The Secretary of State for War, Richard Haldane, had considered this problem in 1906 and replaced the Militia with the Special Reserve (SR) and Extra Reserve (ER) in 1908. He had informed the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1906 of the need to create a large reserve, able to cover six months of wastage during a continental war, which the War Office, based upon recent experiences of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, estimated at 65 to 75 per cent, per annum. Thus, line regiments had one SR battalion for each pair of regular units and, in peace, recruited and trained men as part-time reservists. Men received six months of full-time training and, in the event of a general mobilisation, were recalled and used alongside regular reservists to form a regimental reinforcement pool.⁷ The ER, numbering 27 battalions across selected regiments, had a less clear role. Primarily, they were seen as a way of quickly sending reserve units to garrison parts of the British Empire to relieve regular battalions for active service. They could also be used to train recruits as reinforcements.⁸ Despite criticism that the changes made to the Militia were limited,

⁵Peter Simkins, 'The Four Armies, 1914-1918', in Ian F. W. Beckett and David Chandler (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Army*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 235

⁶David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, & the British People c.1870-2000*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 277-278; Hew Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 207-208.

⁷The National Archives (hereinafter TNA) CAB37/86/11, Memorandum on peace strength of regular army, 1 February 1907; TNA CAB38/12/30, Memorandum on organisation and administration of military forces, 18 June 1906; TNA CAB38/12/34, 89 Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) meeting, 28 June 1906; TNA CAB38/13/10, 95 CID meeting, 21 February 1907; Edward M. Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1980), p. 77 & pp. 85-86.

⁸TNA WO33/505, Final report on organisation of the SR and ER, 14 December 1910.

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as the SR had similar recruitment trends, it had been designed as a mechanism capable of organising, training, and drafting men to regiments during war.⁹

Thus, when Kitchener created the first six New Army divisions (K1) by creating service battalions for each regiment on 12 August 1914, there was a reinforcement system in place. Nevertheless, it is unclear whether Kitchener planned to expand the role of the SR and the ER to support the New Armies when they took to the field. Clearly, there were efforts to expand the SR during the first two months of war. On 30 August, the Army Council temporarily increased the establishment of the SR battalions from 557 to 2,000 all ranks and, after completion of the 12 divisions that formed the Second and Third New Armies (K2 and K3), they would expand to 2,600.¹⁰ Despite the difficulties posed by the breakdown of War Office recruitment machinery, the SR and ER had expanded from a pre-war strength of 61,425 to over 162,000 by 26 September 1914.¹¹ A figure even more impressive when considering the 485 officers and 31,888 other ranks that had been drafted to the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) during the same period.¹²

Nevertheless, this process was probably done to relieve pressure on regimental depots. Regimental depots were overwhelmed during the recruitment boom of early September and, with service battalions vastly overstrength, the SR and ER units could take on additional recruits.¹³ This argument is supported by Kitchener's original plan to dispatch eight reserve battalions to the BEF in late August and, subsequently, to use the SR and ER to form the Second New Army on 9 September.¹⁴ Although no precise reason was given, the deteriorating situation overseas impressed upon Kitchener that the BEF needed reinforcement within the near future. Despite the difficulties experienced in obtaining accurate casualty reports throughout the first few months of war, it was estimated by the Adjutant General of the BEF, Lieutenant-General Nevil Macready, that the army had suffered an estimated 15,000 casualties during the Battle

⁹Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly, *The Edwardian Army: Recruiting, Training, and Deploying the British Army, 1902-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 52, p. 116 & pp. 120-121.

¹⁰TNA WO293/1, Army Council Instruction (ACI) 288, 30 August 1914; TNA WO162/6, Chronology of mobilisation and expansion, 1914-1918; TNA WO163/44, 38 Army Council Meeting, 18 September 1914.

¹¹1914 (Cd. 7252), *The General Annual Report on the British Army for the Year ending 30 September 1913*, p.108; TNA WO114/25, Army strength return, 26 September 1914.

¹²J. E. Edmonds, *Military Operations: France and Belgium, 1914, Volume II*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1925), p. 467.

¹³Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 68.

¹⁴TNA WO163/44, 17 and 30 Army Council Meeting, 26 August and 9 September 1914.

of Mons on 26 August.¹⁵ Furthermore, a separate request from the Inspector-General of Communications, Major-General F. S. Robb, arrived on 4 September, asking for several SR battalions to release regular battalions on the Line of Communication for frontline service.¹⁶ Thus, the SR and ER, with its core of a special and regular reservists, were the obvious choice to reinforce the BEF, as they had a modicum of professional training. Nevertheless, within a few days of this, Kitchener became aware of the vital role played by the SR within the reinforcement system, and the matter was promptly dropped. Afterwards, Kitchener reverted to the dual position of using the SR to sustain and expand the New Armies. He announced on 13 September that the SR would recruit up to 2,600 and use men from each reserve unit to form a service battalion for the Fourth New Army (K4).¹⁷ Although Kitchener stipulated in October that no recruits would be taken from reserve battalions once they reached a strength of 1,500, he had ordered up to 42 per cent of each reserve unit's strength to be transferred across to the New Army.¹⁸ This was critical, as it jeopardised the long-term sustainability of each regiment's reinforcement pool. The monthly wastage rate for infantry on the Western Front, predicted at seven per cent in the *Field Service Regulations, 1909*, had quadrupled to 28 per cent during the first 12 weeks of war.¹⁹ Although these figures were unavailable at the time, the scale of the crisis would have been known, as the War Office were responsible for organising the dispatch of drafts.

Nevertheless, K4 began to be created from late October and each battalion received up to 1,100 men from the SR and ER. Yet, hopes to fully create another six divisions proved overly optimistic. As the Adjutant General at the War Office, Lieutenant-General Henry Sclater, noted in November, most SR and ER battalions lacked the strength to create a fully manned service unit without dropping below the minimum manpower limit.²⁰ Unsurprisingly, this reflected local and regional recruitment patterns. For instance, the 3 North Staffordshire Regiment, based in Lichfield near the fruitful recruitment area of Birmingham, transferred 810 men to the newly formed 10 North Staffordshire Regiment, whilst others, especially regiments in rural localities, struggled. The 3 Dorsetshire Regiment, situated in the small market town of

¹⁵TNA WO95/43, 3 Echelon war diary, 20-21 September 1914; WO95/3972, Inspector-General of Communications (IGC), Adjutant and Quartermaster General Branch (AQMG) war diary, 25 October 1914; Nevil Macready, *Annals of an Active Life, Volume I*, (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1924), pp. 204-205.

¹⁶TNA WO95/3972, IGC AQMG war diary, 4 September 1914.

¹⁷TNA WO163/44, 34 Army Council meeting, 13 September 1914; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 49.

¹⁸TNA WO162/3, Memorandum regarding SR, ER and K4, 8 October 1914.

¹⁹*Field Service Regulations, 1909, Part II* (with 1912 amendments), (London: HMSO, 1912), p. 56; TNA WO159/2, First report on wastage, 1 January 1915.

²⁰TNA WO162/4, Interview notes with Sclater, 28 November 1914.

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Dorchester, could only provide the 7 Dorsetshire Regiment with 65 men by 26 December 1914.²¹ Overall, 29 SR and ER battalions were eventually ordered not to produce a service unit for K4, which included all 21 battalions being formed by the Irish Regiments.²² This was due to the recruitment situation in Ireland, where the recruitment boom of September was limited to urban localities and had rapidly declined in October.²³

However, the War Office did note that several regiments had grown beyond the practical limits of the pre-war reinforcement structure. After a review, the Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Henry Sclater, announced in November 1914 that a reserve battalion and regimental depot at full strength, roughly 2,600 and 300 all ranks respectively, could support up to six regular and service battalions in the field. Although it is not clear what calculations this was based on, the report is an important milestone as it represents the first evaluation of the reinforcement system. Altogether, it drew attention to 17 English and Welsh Regiments that had expanded beyond the limits noted above, with the Northumberland Fusiliers and the Cheshire Regiment over by four and three battalions each, respectively. Altogether, Sclater's solutions were sensible; each regiment with seven battalions should expand their depot accommodation to house 1,000 recruits, whilst those above eight should create an additional ER battalion.²⁴ Although the report offered a definitive structure for the reinforcement system, the War Office ignored it.

Even more uncertain was the situation in Ireland where, following the Haldane reforms of 1906-1908, each Irish regiment had a higher number of reserve units compared to their British counterparts. As the Volunteer Force had not been established in Ireland as it had in the rest of the United Kingdom in 1859, each Irish regiment had three or four Militia battalions. Haldane had not intended to extend the TF, SR or ER to Ireland and planned to retain a proportion of the Irish Militia to undertake home defence. However, under parliamentary pressure, he converted the Irish Militia into the SR and, in addition to the eight battalions needed for the latter, proposed to convert another 14 into ER units.²⁵ It is clear that these decisions were guided by political concerns, as

²¹TNA, WO95/5460, 10 North Staffordshire Regiment service digest, 31 October 1914; TNA WO114/25, Army strength return, 26 December 1914; C. T. Atkinson, *The Dorsetshire Regiment, Volume II*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 119; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 59, p. 66 & p. 70.

²²TNA, WO293/1, ACI 280, 25 October 1914.

²³Bowman, Butler and Wheatley, *The Disparity of Sacrifice*, pp. 10-11.

²⁴TNA, WO162/3, Report on regiments requiring an increased reserve establishment, 26 November 1914.

²⁵Hansard, House of Commons Debate (HC), 10 June 1907, vol. 175, cc. 1135-1136, 1158 and 1177; Hansard, HC, 17 June 1907, vol. 176, cc. 182; William Butler, *The Irish*

the War Office committee designed to consider the formation of the SR in 1907 did not know about the creation of the ER before it was announced in Parliament.²⁶ Regardless of the reasoning, the ER defaulted onto its secondary role of training and drafting reinforcements on the outbreak of war. This created an unwieldy reinforcement system for all Irish regiments and, in most cases, led to a near parity between frontline and reserve battalions. For instance, the ratio of four active and three reserve battalions for the Leinster Regiment was wasteful and, 'simply meant that there were three organizations doing work which could, with no less efficiency, with more uniformity, and considerably less expense, have been performed by one.'²⁷ Indeed, 3, 4 and 5 battalions of the Leinster Regiment only had 922, 477 and 648 other ranks respectively in October 1914, and could have been managed by one reserve battalion.²⁸ Despite the problems this posed, Sclater failed to comment on this in his report and, against all logic, Kitchener confirmed the role of all Irish ER battalions as training reinforcements.²⁹ Whilst Kitchener probably saw these units as a small reservoir of available Irish reinforcements, a sensible course of action would have been to amalgamate these battalions.

Notably, these problems did not affect the TF, which had their own, separate, reinforcement system until 1916. Whilst an analysis of this falls outside the remit of this article, it is important to note that, in comparison to the New Armies, the TF had a logical reinforcement system. After it was decided that TF battalions could serve overseas in August 1914, provided 60 per cent of a unit's strength undertook the Imperial Service Obligation, another unit was needed to undertake its home defence duties. Therefore, Kitchener ordered a duplicate unit to be formed, which was created from a nucleus of Territorials who had not volunteered for overseas service. These units, known as the second line, were to assume home defence duties and draft reinforcements to their sister battalions overseas. A similar process was carried out again in November 1914, when a third line of TF battalions were formed to supply replacements to their corresponding first and second line units. As Ian Beckett and Keith Mitchinson have argued, this did create problems that undermined the effectiveness of the Territorial reinforcement system. Notably, the pledge, which

Amateur Military Tradition in the British Army, 1854-1992, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 12-21; Robert Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia, c.1852-1908' (PhD Thesis, University of Kent, 2014), pp. 241-242.

²⁶TNA WO33/439, Final report of War Office committee on the SR, 26 October 1907.

²⁷F. E. Whitton, *The History of the Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians): Part II, The Great War and The disbandment of the Regiment* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden Ltd., 1924), p. 173.

²⁸TNA WO114/25, Army strength return, 24 October 1914.

²⁹TNA WO162/3, Memorandum on the role of the SR and ER, 27 November 1914.

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guaranteed the legal integrity of Territorial units, stopped servicemen from being posted to other battalions of the same regiment without their consent. This inherent lack of flexibility was exacerbated by its home defence duties, which disrupted training and led to home service personnel, numbering 82,588 in August 1915, remaining in second and third line TF units until May 1915. It must be noted, however, that the TF did not have a functioning reinforcement system on the outbreak of the war. Although the Territorial Reserve was created in 1910 with an establishment of 100,000, it had recruited a mere 483 officers and 1,186 other ranks by September 1913. Furthermore, a number of the problems experienced, including those noted above, can be attributed to the contradictory role and legal status of the TF before the outbreak of War. Considering this, the Territorial reinforcement system, which had to be rapidly created from August 1914, was far more logical than the one created for the New Armies.³⁰

Yet, the most disastrous decision made by Kitchener was the creation of the Second Reserve and Local Reserve in 1915, which were designed to support service and Pals battalions of the New Armies, respectively. The origin of these decisions can be traced back to 1914 and early 1915, when the War Office undertook an extensive analysis of casualties on the Western Front to predict a new set of wastage rates. The first three reports, published in January and April 1915, covered the first three, five and six months of the war, whilst the last was circulated two months later and provided a detailed snapshot of permanent and temporary wastage over a nine month period in the BEF. Notably, the latter estimated that infantry battalions suffered, on a monthly basis, a permanent and temporary wastage rate of 10.1 and 14.1 per cent respectively, with 70 per cent of the latter returning to duty at some point.³¹ Whilst an overestimation, as trench warfare reduced the annual number of casualties, the War Office sensibly used the conclusions of the second wastage report to assess the number of reinforcements needed, per annum, to support a proposed field force of 1,100,000, which represented all British, Dominion, Indian and naval formations with,

³⁰1914 (Cd. 7254), *The General Annual Return of the Territorial Force For the Year 1913*, p. 129; TNA WO70/50, 'Chronological summary of the principal changes in organisation and administration of the TF since mobilisation'; Ian F. W. Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', in Ian F. W. Beckett and Keith Simpson (eds), *A Nation in Arms: a social study of the British army in the First World War*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 130-139; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Army*, pp. 59-60, pp. 62-64 & pp. 67-70; Keith W. Mitchinson, *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army, 1908-1919*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 17-19, pp. 93-94 & pp. 98-101; Keith W. Mitchinson, *The Territorial Force at War, 1914-1916*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 41, pp. 72-74 & pp. 178-180.

³¹TNA WO159/2, First, second and third report on wastage, 1 and 14 January and 16 April 1915; TNA WO159/4, Fourth report on wastage, 23 June 1915.

or earmarked for, the BEF. Overall, it stated a total of 420,000 regular and New army personnel were needed in the reserve at all times to meet an annual wastage of 1,054,200. Specifically, 298,000 infantry recruits needed to be trained as reinforcements every four months to meet a yearly infantry wastage of 894,000.³²

However, based on the figures provided, it became clear that the number of reinforcements available for all arms, roughly 203,000, fell short of the proposed total. To remedy this, the report outlined that the service battalions of K4 were to be repurposed as reinforcements, which equated to just under 52,000 all ranks in mid-February.³³ Though positive, the War Office failed to assess how they could recruit and train a staggering 894,000 infantry replacements, per annum, within a voluntary recruitment model. Recruitment figures had rapidly dropped from 462,901 men in September 1914, to 87,896 in February 1915, with no prospect of a lasting resurgence.³⁴ Furthermore, there was no estimation about how long British formations needed to be sustained for, and whether recruiting could be balanced against competing demands, primarily those of industry.

As a result, Kitchener merely believed more recruits were needed and continued to try and expand the British Army, considering additional New Armies as late as June 1915.³⁵ Admittedly, he may have been influenced by his initial opinion that Britain's full military might would not be deployed until 1917, which would have limited its exposure to attrition.³⁶ However, this viewpoint was losing weight as soon as the New Armies began to be deployed overseas and a second front was opened on the Gallipoli Peninsula in April 1915. Overall, the lack of forethought over these important questions were critical and had attracted criticism by the summer. Notably, the Duke of Northumberland, President of the County TF Association, confided in Lieutenant-General Henry Wilson that Kitchener's organisation was a, 'great show up... as regards the continual sending out of fresh formations instead of replenishing the existing formations at the seat of war. The A.G.'s [Adjutant General's] department are at their wits ends – they cannot replace casualties at this rate'.³⁷

³²TNA WO159/2, Report on manpower requirements of British Forces serving overseas, no date, but February or March 1915.

³³*Ibid.*; TNA WO114/26, Army strength return, 15 February 1915.

³⁴*Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War* (London: HSMO, 1922), p. 364.

³⁵TNA WO152/4, Memo from the Chief of Imperial General Staff to Kitchener, 15 June 1915.

³⁶Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 38.

³⁷Hampshire Record Office (hereinafter HRO), The Royal Green Jackets Regimental Archive (hereinafter TRGJRA), 170A12W/D/1125a, Letters from Duke of Northumberland to Lieutenant-General Henry Wilson, 19 and 25 August 1915.

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Indeed, the true extent of the problem became clear when evaluating the number of service battalions amalgamated or disbanded before the Battle of the Somme. For instance, eight battalions from both 9 and 15 (Scottish) Divisions were amalgamated in May 1916. Thus, 6 and 7 Royal Scots Fusiliers, 7 and 8 King's Own Scottish Borderers, 10 and 11 Highland Light Infantry, and 8 and 10 Gordon Highlanders were, after 10 to 12 months of active duty, amalgamated. Similarly, 9 Royal Munster Fusiliers was disbanded in May 1916 after six months on the Western Front, with personnel used to shore up other battalions of the regiment.³⁸ Although some discretion must be granted due to the unprecedented nature of the situation, it is clear that there was a theoretical, but not practical, understanding of how a force this size could be sustained.

Rather than feeding recruits into the pre-existing reinforcement system, Kitchener decided in April 1915 that K4, bar five battalions, should be converted into a separate organisation called the Second Reserve. Whilst the SR and ER would continue to draft reinforcements to all battalions of the regiment, the Second Reserve, consisting of 75 battalions, would supplement this output by supplying men to service battalions of K1, K2 and K3.³⁹ This was exacerbated by the creation of the Local Reserve in June 1915, which was designed to reinforce the Pals battalions of the newly dubbed Fourth and Fifth New Armies (K4 and K5). In December 1914, Kitchener had sensibly ordered civilian and private authorities administering Pals battalions to recruit an additional two 'depot' companies, numbering 250 men each, as reinforcements. Six months later, Kitchener proposed that they should be formed into 68 'Local Reserve' battalions by amalgamating depot companies of the same regiment. They would supply reinforcements to their corresponding Pal battalions and recruitment for the local reserve would continue to be organised by their sponsors, which would help to sustain their specific character and identity.⁴⁰

Notably, Hine argues both of these changes were important to the development of reinforcement policy, as SR battalions were overworked and the Second and Local Reserve provided New Army formations with their own source of reinforcements. Whilst noting this was a timely decision, as New Army divisions were about to embark for overseas service, her analysis does not expand upon these reforms and simply states that the system worked until altered in 1916. It only needed the recruits to train and, as part of her overarching argument, suggests that the root of the problem

³⁸TNA WO95/3967, IGC war diary, 18 April 1916; TNA, WO95/3968, IGC war diary, 20 May 1916; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 109.

³⁹TNA WO293/2, ACI 96, 10 April 1915.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 4 June 1915; HRO TRGJRA, 170A12W/D/3636-D/3637, History of the 19 (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps; TNA WO293/1, ACI 13, 2 December 1914

was the broader manpower situation. Whilst true, Hine makes insufficient use of important archival material and, as a result, does not consider the broader ramifications of these decisions.⁴¹ Indeed, the Second and Local Reserve expanded the number of reserve battalions from 101 to 244, which bore no relation to Sclater's original recommendations.⁴² For instance, the Northumberland Fusiliers, after excluding the TF, went from one to nine reserve units in the space of several months. Although additional reserve battalions were needed to support their two regular, seven service and 12 Pals battalions, the expansion that took place was more than double what was theoretically needed. This, in turn, plunged the reinforcement system into chaos, as the massive duplication of reserve battalions ensured that the resources needed for training, consisting of instructors, equipment, and training facilities, were inadequate. Whilst 10 (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment was fortunate in obtaining some rifles in March 1915, they did not have access to a rifle range for several more months. Others, such as 17 (Reserve) Rifle Brigade, lacked basic equipment until the summer of 1916.⁴³

Overall, these decisions had provided the War Office with an opportunity to reorganise the reinforcement system to meet the circumstances of individual regiments. Instead, it created a convoluted reinforcement system that led to each part actively competing against one another for a dwindling number of recruits. Despite a limited resurgence between March and June 1915, enlistments steadily dropped over the summer of 1915 to 71,617 in September.⁴⁴ From an official perspective, the Second Reserve was penalised, as the War Office prioritised recruits for the SR if it was below a strength of 2,085. As the latter rarely attained this strength throughout 1915 due to consistent drafting, it received the bulk of new recruits, which led to the Second Reserve shrinking in size from 43,866 other ranks in April to 32,594 in November.⁴⁵ Rather than reconsider the size and organisation of the reinforcement system, the War Office continued to propose *ad hoc* measures to resolve these problems. For instance, it suggested any understrength reserve battalion could organise a recruiting party within its home command or, if below its establishment by a significant margin, the entire country. Whilst this gave units of the Second Reserve an opportunity to recruit additional manpower, it had to compete against the SR, ER, Local Reserve and TF, which were doing the same. 10 (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment had some

⁴¹Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 50-51, p. 60, pp. 98-99 & p. 142.

⁴²TNA WO114/27, Army strength return, 13 December 1915

⁴³Imperial War Museum (hereinafter IWM), Document 13802, Training report on 17 (Reserve) Rifle Brigade, 20 June 1916; TNA WO95/5460, 10 (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment service digest.

⁴⁴*Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War*, p. 364.

⁴⁵TNA WO114/26, Army strength return, 26 April 1915; TNA WO114/27, Army strength return, 8 November 1915; TNA WO293/2, ACI 145, 15 April 1915.

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success but struggled to recruit large numbers of men, as they had to contend with other reserve battalions. Captain J. Best and a recruitment party managed to recruit 150 men in Stoke-on-Trent through canvassing over the Summer of 1915. Yet, in the following Autumn, the same group obtained less than 80 men, as other units were vying for recruits within the city.⁴⁶ Indeed, between September and October 1915, recruitment marches, rallies and speeches had also been held for 3/5 North Staffordshire Regiment and 11 (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment. In addition, the Army Service Corps had a recruitment office in the city and there was a large recruitment drive by the commanding officer of 25 (Reserve) Middlesex Regiment, Colonel Sir John Ward, M.P., to obtain recruits for three new pioneer battalions. Adding to this was a number of regional recruitment marches, which included soldiers representing the Royal Field Artillery, Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment), Manchester Regiment and Royal Army Medical Corps.⁴⁷

Altogether, this was an inefficient, duplication of effort, especially as the Second Reserve lacked the resources needed to compete against the Local Reserve. Although Hine is correct to note that the latter had a smaller recruitment pool to tap due to the unique identity of most Pals Battalions it supported, it did have the support of their sponsor.⁴⁸ For example, 22 (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps was supported by their parent organisation, the British Empire League, throughout 1915 and even into 1916, once conscription was introduced.⁴⁹ They organised recruitment campaigns in regional and national newspapers, which advertised the pioneer battalion it supported, 20 King's Royal Rifle Corps. Notably, the campaign was selective, targeting a number of mining communities, such as those in Durham, Somerset and Wiltshire, who were more likely to have the artisans and workers needed for a pioneer battalion. Furthermore, organising bodies could offer additional benefits to make enlistment more appealing. The British Empire League offered each recruit an additional pay of 2d. a day and private billeting in London, whilst the Tyneside Irish Committee in Newcastle offered men, with an 'above average' education, the opportunity to become an NCO upon enlistment into 34 (Reserve) Northumberland Fusiliers.⁵⁰

⁴⁶TNA WO95/5460, 10 (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment service digest.

⁴⁷British Newspaper Archive (hereinafter BNA), *Staffordshire Sentinel*, 14, 21 and 30 September, and 4, 8 and 27 October 1915.

⁴⁸Hine, *Refilling Haig's Army*, p. 50.

⁴⁹IWM, Document 13802, Training report on 22 (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps, 20 June 1916.

⁵⁰BNA, *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 20 November 1915; BNA, *Newcastle Journal*, 25 August and 22 October 1915; BNA, *Somerset Gazette*, 12 November 1915; BNA, *Western Gazette*, 17 December 1915; BNA, *Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser*, 20 November 1915.

Collectively, this ensured that the Second Reserve was never strong enough to fully support the service battalions of K1, K2 and K3, which led to the SR and ER supplying a large proportion of their reinforcements from early 1915. For instance, 3 Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) drafted an estimated 843 men to service battalions of the regiment in 1915, which included 250 other ranks to 9 Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) in October, after the battalion had suffered 333 casualties at the Battle of Loos.⁵¹ In September 1915, 3 Norfolk Regiment dispatched 721 all ranks to 7 Norfolk Regiment, which equated to 40.1 per cent of its yearly, drafting total, of 2,423.⁵² This distinction is important, as it expands our understanding of how specific military identities within Peter Simkins' 'Four Armies' concept began to break down. Principally, Simkins has argued that the British Army was formed of three distinct armies by the end of 1915: the regular army, the New Armies, and the TF, each with their own formations and characteristics. This, he claims, began to breakdown in 1916 due to mounting casualties and the introduction of conscription through the Military Service Acts of 1916. The latter conscripted men for general service, who, forming part of Simkins' 'fourth army', were used to fill up depleted battalions. As a result, regular, New Army and Territorial identities were diluted, which removed or blurred many of the differences between them.⁵³ Whilst this concept is illustrative of broader recruitment trends, it is clear from the analysis above that the blending of these separate identities began as soon as New Army formations were deployed overseas. The Second Reserve was simply incapable of creating a dedicated stream of reinforcements to the New Armies and, as a result, service battalions received a large proportion of their reinforcements from the same source as the regulars, the SR and ER. Whilst this diluted the distinctive identity of New Army battalions, it did lead to the development of a broader, regimental identity. This is supported by James E. Kitchen's analysis of 54 (East Anglian) Division and its experiences in the Sinai and Palestine. After suffering devastating casualties at the First and Second Battles of Gaza in the Spring of 1917, the local identity of Territorial battalions quickly eroded as conscripts began to arrive in large numbers. Despite this, as Kitchen rightfully claims, this was subsequently transcended by a universal identity based on the regimental ethos of the battalion, as soldiers could identify with its broad and inclusive traditions.⁵⁴ Although occurring under different circumstances, the identity of New Army

⁵¹TNA WO95/1744, 9 (Scottish) Division AQMG war diary, divisional casualty report for 25-29 September 1915; TNA WO95/5459, 3 Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) war diary, January - December 1915.

⁵²F. L. Petre, *The History of the Norfolk Regiment, 1685-1918, Volume II*, (Norwich: Jarrold and Sons, Ltd., 1923), p. 117.

⁵³Simkins, 'The Four Armies', pp. 235-255.

⁵⁴James E. Kitchen, *The British Imperial Army in the Middle East: Morale and Military Identity in the Sinai and Palestine Campaigns, 1916-1918*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 135-138.

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battalions underwent a similar process in 1915, as original members of each unit were replaced with reinforcements that had a common, shared experience, based upon their training in the regimental reserve.

Although the Pals Battalions of K4 and K5 do not precisely fit this model, as most were not deployed until early 1916, there is evidence to suggest their original identity began to fade before the Battle of the Somme. Whilst Peter Simkins has recently identified some factors that may have caused this, such as the granting of commissions to middle class men from Pals battalions akin to TF 'class corps', the organisation of the Local Reserve is not mentioned.⁵⁵ As stated, a large proportion of Local Reserve battalions had been formed by merging one or more depot companies of different Pals battalions from the same regiment. However, due to the promise that men would only serve within a specific battalion, only affiliated depot companies within each reserve unit were, theoretically, liable to reinforce their associated Pals battalion. For example, 19 (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps was formed of depot companies from 16 and 17 King's Royal Rifle Corps, which were sponsored by the Church Lads Brigade and the British Empire League, respectively. As a result, only three companies supplied 16 King's Royal Rifle Corps, with another two for 17 King's Royal Rifle Corps.⁵⁶ Therefore, each service battalion was only supported by roughly 500 to 750 men. Once these initial reinforcements were absorbed, it would take months before additional reinforcements were available. It took time to recruit men or, as will be discussed, receive conscript replacements, which then, under the War Office training syllabus, needed 12, and then 14, weeks of instruction before they could be drafted.⁵⁷

Thus, the Local Reserve struggled to sustain Pals Battalions on the frontline. Returning to the previous example, 19 (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps had, within a short period of time, begun to run out of reinforcements for 17 King's Royal Rifle Corps. The demand for drafts had started several months before deployment and only increased after March 1916, once it began frontline service on the Western Front. Yet, the British Empire League, trying to supply multiple units, were unable to provide an adequate number of recruits to cover those drafted, which quickly led to a lack of trained reinforcements for the battalion. With their affiliated depot companies depleted, the War Office were forced to break their pledge and draft soldiers

⁵⁵Peter Simkins, 'The Raising of the New Armies: Some Further Reflections' in Peter Liddle (ed.), *Britain Goes to War: How the First World War Began to Reshape the Nation*, (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2015), pp.103-105

⁵⁶HRO TRGJRA, 170A12W/D/3636-D/3637, History of the 19 (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps.

⁵⁷Australian War Memorial (hereinafter AWM), AWM4 1/66/2, Report on Australian Imperial Force Depots in the United Kingdom, July 1916 – April 1917; IWM Document 13802, Report on number of recruits with over three months training, 15 May 1916.

associated with the Church Lads Brigade to 17 King's Royal Rifle Corps. Although this caused considerable anger and frustration among men and officers, this practice continued until all recruits were supplied through conscription.⁵⁸

In other cases, the role of Pals battalions may have been changed to reduce their exposure to attrition and the need for reinforcements. For example, a proposal to break up 19 Lancashire Fusiliers was made in May 1916. Although no reason is given, the battalion only had one depot company affiliated to it, which numbered 195 all ranks before it was merged into 21 (Reserve) Lancashire Fusiliers in August 1915. Although the latter reached a strength of 1,059 by March 1916, this represented the total number of reinforcements available to 15, 16 and 19 Lancashire Fusiliers.⁵⁹ Although the proposal to disband the battalion was rejected, it was redesignated as a pioneer battalion two months later, which was similar to how Territorial battalions with an inadequate supply of reinforcements were utilised. Indeed, 1/1, 1/2 and 1/3 Monmouthshire Regiment was, after being amalgamated together in May 1915, able to resume their separate identities from August by becoming Pioneer battalions.⁶⁰ Thus, the Local Reserve of 68 battalions was, in reality, a collection of independent reinforcement companies, that were too small to reinforce anything more than routine wastage. As a result, the unique identity of some Pals battalions began to fade upon deployment and the Battle of the Somme, though devastating, simply sped up the process of dilution underway.

However, Kitchener and the War Office remained oblivious to these systematic problems and were adamant that the difficulties experienced arose from a lack of manpower, as the reinforcement system had dwindled in size to 154,171 fit recruits by 3 January 1916.⁶¹ The War Office did not conduct a full review of manpower policy and the reinforcement system and, instead, focused its energies on obtaining additional recruits. The Derby Scheme, launched in late 1915, was a last-ditch attempt to maintain the British Army under voluntary recruitment. Although 1,150,000 single men were willing to serve between October and December, only 343,000 were considered immediately available.⁶² Deemed a failure, it was closely followed by the introduction of conscription for all men aged 18 to 41, which was achieved through the Military

⁵⁸HRO TRGJRA, 170A12W/D/3636-D/3637, History of the 19 (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps.

⁵⁹TNA WO95/441, Fourth Army AQMG war diary, 22 May 1916; TNA WO114/57, Army strength return, 26 July 1915; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 109; J. C. Latter, *The History of the Lancashire Fusiliers, 1914-1918, Volume 1*, (Aldershot: Gale & Polden Ltd., 1949), p. 131.

⁶⁰TNA WO95/647, Second Army AQMG war diary, 6 August 1915.

⁶¹TNA WO114/28, Army strength return, 3 January 1916.

⁶²Beckett, 'The Nation in Arms', p. 12

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Service Act and Military Service Act (No. 2) of January and May 1916, respectively. Nevertheless, the War Office's aim to conscript 967,000 men between January and June 1916 was unrealistic and, though 205,000 men were conscripted for general service by April, they had predicted an intake of 682,000, which, in their opinion, created a (somewhat artificial) deficiency of 477,000.⁶³

Due to this, the War Office continued to blame the shortcomings of the reinforcement system on the broader manpower situation.⁶⁴ However, the introduction of conscription did provide the War Office with complete power over the manpower it received. Whilst the supply of recruits was too small to bring the reserve to full strength and meet the demands of the British Army, the War Office attempted to devise a method of distribution that mitigated some of these problems. By considering the strength of all reserve battalions, the number of active units they supported and the overall size of each reserve section, recruits could be economically distributed to create a consistent output of trained reinforcements.⁶⁵ To achieve this, conscripts were called up to their local regimental depot and, according to guidelines circulated by the War Office every month, distributed to reserve battalions across each home command.⁶⁶

Though simple, the method of distribution was incredibly inefficient. Rather than create a steady stream of manpower to reserve battalions, most units did not receive recruits until they were depleted and, akin to the recruitment spike of 1914, were inundated at short notice. For instance, 15 (Reserve) Rifle Brigade received few men during the first three months of 1916 and was reportedly 'drained dry'. However, between the 15 April and 2 May, the battalion received 646 new recruits. Unsurprisingly, this process was incredibly disruptive and the Inspector-General of Infantry, Major-General G. G. A. Egerton, argued this undermined training within each reserve battalion. Specifically, he noted that 14 (Reserve) Middlesex Regiment, which had received 750 men in one week, could not effectively organise them, as, 'a battalion with only 250 serviceable rifles cannot assimilate and train such a mass of men sent to it at one time.' Simultaneously, battalions with good commanding officers and training staff were left, 'pining for work to do', as they had not received recruits for weeks.

⁶³TNA WO162/28, Reports on results of conscription, 15 March and 8 April 1916.

⁶⁴TNA WO33/881, 176 and 177 Army Council meetings, 6 and 15 April 1916.

⁶⁵TNA WO162/6, Chronology of mobilisation and expansion, 1914-1918.

⁶⁶For examples, see; TNA WO293/4, ACI 212 and 378, 26 January and 18 February 1916.

Thus, the unequal distribution of conscripts delayed training and undermined the supply of reinforcements overseas.⁶⁷

Overall, it became clear once the Battle of the Somme begun that the reinforcement system could not fully support the British Army. Whilst able to dispatch an impressive 106,552 men to the BEF in July, it is notable that only 37,478 recruits across the SR, ER, Second Reserve and Local Reserve were recorded as trained and fit for general service on 26 June 1916.⁶⁸ As a result, the War Office officially resorted to using partially-trained reinforcements of at least nine weeks training, and promised to send just over 30,000 to the BEF by the middle of July.⁶⁹ Despite this, reinforcements became scarce and the War Office and Adjutant General in France, Lieutenant-General G. H. Fowke, resorted to transferring men between regiments to make up shortfalls.⁷⁰ Comments about this practice began to circulate within the BEF by August, with the General Officer Commanding Fourth Army, General Sir Henry Rawlinson, requesting an explanation for why drafts were being sent to the wrong regiments.⁷¹

Whilst this does not represent a complete collapse of the reinforcement system, as argued by Hew Strachan, the immense difficulties experienced did force the War Office to carry out substantial reforms.⁷² Announced in August and coming into existence on 1 September, the Training Reserve overhauled and simplified the chaotic system. The SR, ER, and parts of the third Territorial line were retained as the primary mechanism of the reinforcement system. Recruits obtained through conscription would be channelled into regimental reserves from their depots, which were drawn from their corresponding recruitment area. If unable to obtain a sufficient number, surplus recruits from neighbouring regimental reserves and areas would be redistributed to ensure all remained at, or near to, full establishment. Once achieved, the surplus of recruits was distributed across 112 battalions of the Training Reserve, which were drawn from an amalgamation of Second and Local Reserve battalions. Most importantly, the Training Reserve were liable to train and supply reinforcements to any regiment, and it met demands for drafts when there were not enough men

⁶⁷IWM Document 13802, Reports on 14 (Reserve) Middlesex Regiment, number of recruits with over three months training, and 15 (Reserve) Rifle Brigade, 9-10, 15, and 23-24 May 1916.

⁶⁸TNA WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 31 July 1916; TNA WO114/29, Army strength return, 26 June 1916.

⁶⁹AWM AWM4 1/66/2, Report on Australian Imperial Force Depots in the United Kingdom, July 1916 – April 1917; TNA WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 28 June 1916; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 108 and p. 117.

⁷⁰TNA WO95/4185, 8 and 29 Infantry Base Depot war diary, July - October 1916.

⁷¹TNA WO95/441, Fourth Army AQMG war diary, 8 August 1916.

⁷²Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army*, pp. 207-209.

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available in the SR or ER to do so.⁷³ Although these changes did not affect Irish Regiments, which continued to rely upon the SR, ER and, for the 36 (Ulster) Division, an additional six reserve battalions, these reforms were instrumental in creating a simple and flexible system capable of producing trained reinforcements.⁷⁴ Indeed, every regiment, regardless of its size and the broader manpower situation, had access to replacements, whilst valuable resources needed for training, such as rifles and specialist equipment, were concentrated, with the best commanding officers and instructors from the reserve selected to lead and instruct recruits.⁷⁵

Curiously, Hine claims that these reforms were implemented to refine reinforcement processes and mirror the changes made to the reinforcement system in France by General Headquarters (GHQ) between May and July 1916. Specifically, reinforcements were to be organised by regiment, rather than individual battalion, when arriving at the Infantry Base Depots in France. Whilst this provided GHQ with additional flexibility to replenish depleted battalions, as reinforcements could be directed from these larger, regimental manpower pools, it is unlikely that this would cause wholesale reform in the United Kingdom, as reinforcements from reserve units could simply be filtered into this new structure.⁷⁶ Rather, it was a belated realisation within the War Office that the haphazard reinforcement system built up since 1914 could not properly function under the strains of industrial warfare.

Despite the importance of these changes, the broader historiography has failed to assess this and, instead, focused on whether the Training Reserve undermined regimental integrity and, by extension, the local identity of battalions. Indeed, J. G. Fuller and Clive Hughes, among others, claim that the Training Reserve effectively transformed the New Armies and, more broadly, the British Army, into a nationalised army that drew on a generalised manpower pool.⁷⁷ David French has echoed these

⁷³TNA WO293/5, ACI 1528, 6 August 1916; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 142.

⁷⁴TNA WO114/30, Army strength return, 4 September 1916.

⁷⁵IWM Document 13802, Report on third line Home Counties Division and 7 Training Reserve Brigade, 14 and 26 September 1916.

⁷⁶TNA WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 12 May 1916; TNA, WO95/3969, Letter from Deputy Adjutant General, Major-General Sir Edward Graham, to Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General G. H. Fowke, 10 June 1916; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Army*, pp. 110-113 & p. 142.

⁷⁷HRO TRGJRA, 170A12W/D/3636-D/3637, Official History of the 19 (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps and 109 Training Reserve; J. G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914-1918*, (Oxford: Oxford University press, 43-44; Hughes, 'The New Armies', p. 114; Helen, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 58.

arguments, claiming initial attempts to maintain localised recruitment were dropped due to mounting casualties and, by creating the Training Reserve, the War Office had purposefully dismantled links between regiments and local communities.⁷⁸ As Helen McCartney states, this is based upon various assessments of unit composition, which demonstrates the dilution of local identity across British units from 1916. Indeed, Ian Beckett's analysis of various Territorial units, such as 1/1 Buckinghamshire Battalion, demonstrated a steep decline in local identity after the Somme, whilst Kitchens' research, as mentioned, records a similar process occurring in 54 (East Anglian) Division in the Middle East from 1917.⁷⁹

The War Office did, however, go to great lengths to preserve local and regional identities within each regiment. As argued by McCartney, Hine and Mitchinson, the SR, ER and Territorial reserve units remained the primary method of training and drafting recruits, whilst the system of allocation, described above, ensured that conscripted manpower was channelled according to their local and regional ties into the appropriate reserve battalion. The Training Reserve did not supplant this and was only utilised once these traditional sources had been depleted. Although these changes diluted local identity across Territorial and New Army units, it did enable a number of regiments to sustain a broader, regional identity. As McCartney demonstrates, 1/6 and 1/10 King's (Liverpool) Regiment had lost their local identity by 1918, with only 42 and 68 per cent of men enlisting in Liverpool and the surrounding areas, respectively. Yet, it had strong regional ties, as 70 and 87 per cent of men had enlisted in Lancashire. Admittedly, some regiments, such as the Buckinghamshire battalions, struggled to replicate this, as it depended upon a number of factors, including the geographical composition of each home command and size of regional populations within it. Nevertheless, McCartney's research proves that the War Office did attempt and, in part, succeed at maintaining regimental ties with regional localities.⁸⁰

In conclusion, the reinforcement system underwent colossal changes under Kitchener and the War Office between 1914 and 1916. The alterations made were far from effective and, overall, failed to create a system capable of sustaining the New Armies overseas. Its expansion was chaotic, and the decisions made by Kitchener were increasingly reactive to the deteriorating recruitment situation, rather than a search for an effective organisation. Instead of gradually expanding the SR and ER to support the New Armies, as proposed in November 1914, Kitchener created the Second and Local Reserves in 1915 to recruit and train reinforcements for service and Pals

⁷⁸French, *Military Identities*, pp. 277-278.

⁷⁹Beckett, *The Territorial Force*, pp. 146-151; Kitchen, *The British Imperial Army in the Middle East*, pp. 135-137.

⁸⁰Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 142-144; Mitchinson, *The Territorial Force at War*, p. 206; McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, pp. 58-74.

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battalions, respectively. Although this secured additional recruits for the reserve, these changes divided the reinforcement system into competing parts that vied over a dwindling number of recruits. The Second Reserve lacked the manpower and resources needed to fully support the service battalions of K1, K2 and K3, whilst the illogical organisation of the Local Reserve ensured it could only support Pals battalions for a short period of time. This was a significant duplication of effort that, ultimately, contributed to the breakdown of the New Armies distinctive image from 1915, as both regular and service units frequently received reinforcements from the same part of the reserve. Thus, rather than a blurring of identities from 1916, as argued in the existing historiography, a broader, regimental identity, based on a common, shared experience in the SR and ER, had been forming since 1915. Despite this, the War Office continued to blame the problems of the reinforcement system on the broader manpower situation. Although an important factor, this focus ensured no meaningful changes were implemented until the Battle of the Somme had begun, when it became clear that the reinforcement system could not properly function. Thus, the Training Reserve was introduced in September 1916, which rationalised the system and redistributed vital resources needed for training. Although it has been accused of destroying, or damaging, regimental links, every regiment had, regardless of its size, access to reinforcements. It granted the reinforcement system the flexibility needed to function under the ceaseless strain of industrial warfare, which enabled it to continue sustaining the New Armies and, more broadly, the British Army, until the armistice in November 1918.