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Cover photo: New Zealand repatriates arrive in England: everyday life for repatriated POWs. Newly-repatriated New Zealand Prisoner of War Don Croft shows fellow repatriates P Tohiariki and M A Cameron a dress dagger, which he 'acquired' as a souvenir from the German Camp Commandant after liberation. The men are standing in the lounge of the Norfolk Hotel in Margate, Kent, England, UK, April 1945. Photo © Imperial War Museum (Q 24539)

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Letters and communications to the Co-editors should be sent to:

[editor@bjmh.org.uk](mailto:editor@bjmh.org.uk)

or

Prof Richard Grayson  
Department of History  
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SE14 6NW  
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## EDITORIAL

### EDITORIAL\*

Since the publication of the last issue of the British Journal for Military History we were saddened by the news of the death of Sir Michael Howard. His impact on the discipline of military history is immeasurable, and his support for this journal when it was launched was greatly appreciated. We reproduce in this issue the tribute to him from William Philpott, the President of the British Commission for Military History.

This issue contains three fascinating articles representing varied aspects of military history (broadly defined): mutinies, identification of the dead, and the repatriation of prisoners of war, while ranging across two centuries. An even broader range of subject matter is covered in our book reviews and we can now announce that our next issue will deal with 'emotions in battle' using early modern case studies to consider the subject. That special issue will be published in July, and our planned publication schedule is now three issues per year, with the standard issues published in March and November and the special usually in July.

We are also pleased to announce a new initiative for future issues which we hope will be a useful addition to the journal: 'Research Notes.' This section will offer the opportunity for people to submit short (1,000-3,000 words) pieces of research which would be of interest to readers but do not merit a full article. Research Notes might be, for example, a case study which sheds light on a wider controversy or question, a discussion of the value of a newly available source, or an analysis of a specific document. We are using the title 'Research Notes' to stress that these should be based on research rather than being opinion pieces or letters, and these pieces will still be peer reviewed. Submissions should follow the same format as for articles, aside from their length.

In early 2020, faced with a growing number of submissions, we decided to expand our editorial team. We are very pleased to welcome on board Dr William Butler (University of Kent, UK) and Dr Yu Suzuki (Kyoto University, Japan). We look forward to working with them.

Finally, we remain concerned about a scarcity of submissions from female academics, since this does not reflect the balance of historians working in the field. We are

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reflecting on suggestions from our Editorial Advisory Board and in the meantime simply wish to flag that we are actively seeking submissions from female researchers.

RICHARD S. GRAYSON & ERICA WALD  
Goldsmiths, University of London, UK

SIR MICHAEL HOWARD

## PROFESSOR SIR MICHAEL HOWARD, 1922-2019\*

Professor Sir Michael Howard, a long-standing and in later years honorary member of the British Commission for Military History died on 30 November 2019, aged 97. Sir Michael was the foremost military historian of the second half of the twentieth century. After wartime military service in the Coldstream Guards in Italy and studies at Oxford University, he embarked on an academic career at King's College London. Here he founded the War Studies Department in the early 1960s, from which root grew the expansion and diversification of military history in British universities over the last sixty years. An advocate of what he called 'total history', he believed that the history of strategy and military operations could not be properly understood separately from the history of the societies that went to war. This philosophy was reflected in his scholarly output, such as his masterful history of the Franco-Prussian war published in 1961. An official historian and translator of Clausewitz, generations of students will best know his work from his short but seminal textbook, *War in European History*, first published in the 1970s and which is still recommended today. He had the gift of summarising the complexities of history in short, erudite and readable texts: two published collections of lectures, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (1977) and *The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of the Two World Wars* (1971), remain widely read and cited. After leaving King's Sir Michael was Chichele Professor of the History of War and Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford University. His final academic post was Robert A. Lovett Professor of Military and Naval History at Yale University.

Sir Michael educated several generations of military history scholars at King's and Oxford. I myself had the good fortune to be taught by him as a final-year undergraduate shortly before his retirement from Oxford – his special subject on British strategy in the First World War era directed me onto the path which I have followed as a scholar. Many BCMH members and military historians will have experienced his warmth and encouragement to students and scholars. Those who had the chance to hear him speak, which he did with verve well into his 90s, will remember his engaging, witty and thought-provoking lecturing style. To an older generation he was a colleague and mentor, to the younger generation an inspiration or legend. I commend to you his autobiography, *Captain Professor* (Continuum, 2006). The modern military history profession has lost its creator and colossus.

WILLIAM PHILPOTT  
President, British Commission for Military History

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# The Nenagh Mutiny of 7-8 July 1865: a re-appraisal

Paul Huddie\*

University College Dublin, Ireland

Email: [paulhuddie01@gmail.com](mailto:paulhuddie01@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

*Mutinies or 'affrays' by regular and militia soldiers were a constant feature of British military life and civil-military relations during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; neither were they absent from the early twentieth century. This article re-evaluates one such event: that by the North Tipperary Militia in Ireland in 1856. The event is set within both a heretofore lacking Irish social and political context and the broader context of British Army mutinies as a whole.*

## Introduction

Of all the events that occurred in Ireland at the time of the Crimean War of 1854-6, two have become embedded in the popular folklore of Ireland and the Irish counties in which they occurred. These were the national 'Crimean Banquet', held at Dublin City on 22 October 1856, and the 'Nenagh Mutiny' which transpired nearly four months earlier on 7-8 July in County Tipperary.<sup>1</sup> During a violent protest against the abysmal conditions of the regiment's imminent disembodiment, the soldiers of the North Tipperary Militia imprisoned their officers, temporarily took over the town and after a day's rioting were suppressed by regular troops. Although Nenagh was the only incident of an armed mutiny by militia during the Crimean War, our understanding of the reasons for this 'outrage' remain confused. Despite it being a well-known event, the details of which have been extensively studied by military historians, the memory of this mutiny in Ireland does not elicit comparable feelings and emotions of national

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\* Dr Paul Huddie is a historical researcher interested in war and society, principally within the British Empire in the long 19c, and Research Programmes Officer at University College Dublin.

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<sup>1</sup>For the most recent account of the Nenagh mutiny in the context of the Crimean War see Paul Huddie, *The Crimean War and Irish Society* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), pp. 147-9 & for the banquet see pp. 70-4.

uprising or resistance to those in India as a result of the far larger mutiny of the Indian army, only a year later.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this article is two-fold. Firstly, to provide a social and political context to this event, which has heretofore remained absent from both Irish and British historiographies. Secondly, to answer three specific questions: 1) what were the root causes of the mutiny at Nenagh; 2) where does the Nenagh Mutiny sit within the broader history of mutiny in Ireland, Britain and the British Empire from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, and how unique was it in relation to the same; 3) what was wider Irish society's perceptions of the mutiny particularly in the press, by Irish military and civil leaders and by Irish parliamentarians?<sup>3</sup>

The Nenagh Mutiny began on 7 July 1856 and lasted twenty-four hours. Men of the North Tipperary Militia disobeyed and subsequently imprisoned their officers. The disaffected men took control of the town for a short period and proceeded to attack the premises of the civil authorities, including the two police barracks, as well as private dwellings. The following day the district commander, Major-General Sir James Chatterton dispatched 500 regular British Army infantry (41st, 47th and 50th Foot) and 100 Lancers from the nearby garrison towns of Templemore and Birr, and after some street fighting, the mutiny was suppressed, leaving several mutineers and soldiers dead. Seventy militiamen were arrested, ten were put on trial and nine were convicted.<sup>4</sup>

Although violent affrays by the military were not uncommon, the use of fire arms and the loss of life at Nenagh was unusual.<sup>5</sup> Prior to Nenagh, the weapons reportedly utilised the most often in similar Irish disturbances were fists, sticks, stones, brickbats and the bayonet, so the most serious outcome was men being 'severely or dangerously wounded'.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>For the Indian Mutiny's effect on modern Indian national consciousness, see Hugh Tinker, '1857 and 1957: The Mutiny and Modern India' in *International Affairs*, xxxiv, no. 1 (January, 1958), p. 57.

<sup>3</sup>See the recent publication of a comparable study of the 1920 Connaught Rangers mutiny at Solon, India by Mario Draper: 'Mutiny under the Sun: The Connaught Rangers, India, 1920' in *War in History* (published online 25 February 2019). Accessed 8 March 2019.

<sup>4</sup>For a full account of the events at Nenagh in 1856, including witness statements, the report of the military court of inquiry and the military and civil correspondences after the event see the Chief Secretary's papers (CSORP) in the National Archives of Ireland, MSS 16406, 16431, 16447, 16510, 17074, 20790-3 and 22042.

<sup>5</sup>Huddie, *The Crimean War*, pp. 148.

<sup>6</sup>*Derby Mercury*, 16 May 1855.

## THE NENAGH MUTINY OF 7-8 JULY 1856

While Nenagh shared multiple characteristics with other mutinies from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, it contrasts with other military outrages that occurred in Ireland during the Crimean War because it elicited widespread public sympathy. And while this sympathy was unique during the war with Russia, it was not unknown in relation to other mutinies involving Irish regiments. Most importantly, that of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in 1887 at Pietermartizburg in Natal, South Africa, where, after a small affray which left two soldiers dead, the ringleader, Belfast-born Private Joseph McCrea, was the subject of a high-level clemency campaign that the governor of Natal refused to countenance.<sup>7</sup>

Most studies of the Nenagh mutiny by the historians of Ireland and the Crimean War have addressed the events from a military perspective: giving blow-by-blow accounts of the outrage and detailing the subsequent actions of the regular and militia units and the key personalities involved.<sup>8</sup> An exception is the author's analysis of the views of Irish politicians in both Houses of Parliament in the immediate aftermath of the mutiny, as well as a brief engagement with the responses of the Irish military and civil executives.<sup>9</sup> Given the general lack of such a broad context before there is a need to re-evaluate the events of 7-8 July 1856. This study is not another military analysis of the mutiny, instead it examines the perceptions and feelings of Irish society about Nenagh, and which were made manifest through the subsequent Court of Inquiry, contemporary press reports, the arguments of Irish parliamentarians and the attitudes of the most senior military and political men in Ireland.

Multiple sources have been included from the official records of the political and military authorities in Ireland at Dublin Castle (the Chief Secretary of Ireland's papers, National Archives of Ireland) and at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, (the Kilmainham papers, National Library of Ireland) which have not been used in previous studies of Nenagh. In addition, a cross-section of Irish newspapers have been examined: Protestant and Catholic; Conservative and Liberal; together with the Hansard parliamentary proceedings.

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<sup>7</sup>For more see Graham Dominy, *Last Outpost on the Zulu Frontier: Fort Napier and the British imperial garrison* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2016), chapter 8.

<sup>8</sup>Rob Robinson, 'The Nenagh Mutiny' in *War Correspondent*, xviii, no. 4 (January, 2001), pp. 14-18; David

Murphy, "'Battle of the breeches": the Nenagh mutiny, July 1856' in *Tipperary Historical Journal*, (2001), pp. 139-45; David Murphy, *Ireland and the Crimean War* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), pp. 197-206; William Butler, *The Irish Amateur Military Tradition in the British Army, 1854-1992* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 117, 166.

<sup>9</sup>Huddie, *The Crimean War*, pp. 30-2; pp.147-9.

## Overview: The Incidence of Mutiny in the British Army

It is necessary to understand the double context in which the Nenagh Mutiny occurred. Firstly, the context of the Crimean War when the North Tipperary Infantry was re-embodied and called up for full time service in 1854-5. The same applied to other Irish and Scottish Militia regiments which all served as the Regular Army's principal recruitment mechanism. English and Welsh militia regiments had already been re-embodied in 1852 in response to a French invasion scare.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, Nenagh occurred in 1856, barely eleven years after the first potato crop failure and only five years after the resultant Irish Famine had come to an end.<sup>11</sup> While the Famine had an apparent effect upon enlistment numbers into the Regulars in 1845-7, it had no direct influence upon the Tipperary Infantry or the Irish Militia more generally, because of their dis-embodied state.<sup>12</sup>

Mutinies have been the focus of continuous and multifaceted research and as Peter Way, Kaushik Roy, Graham Dominy and Thomas Bartlett have all shown, mutinies are not a modern phenomenon.<sup>13</sup> British soldiers, have on many occasions, both threatened or engaged in 'collective violence' or have withheld their labour in response to economic or multiple other motivations.<sup>14</sup> However, in 1856, there is one other aspect that the authorities did not consider and which may explain why the mutiny occurred at Nenagh and nowhere else at that time. Tipperary had an extremely poor record of agricultural unrest in the nineteenth century. According to James Donnelly and William Vaughan, during the Famine years of 1845-51, Tipperary had nineteen times more evictions than Fermanagh, the county with the lowest number.

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<sup>10</sup>For more this and above see Huddie, *The Crimean War*, pp. 143.

<sup>11</sup>Huddie, *The Crimean War*, p. 198. For more on Ireland's post-famine recovery see Chapter 6.

<sup>12</sup>For more on the enlistment numbers throughout the United Kingdom in 1844-7 see *Returns of the establishment of the British army at home and abroad in 1846, 1847 and 1848, and on the 1st January 1845 and 1848; also, number of recruits for the British army admitted from 1844 to 1847*, p. 5, H.C. 1847-48, (228), xli, 23.

<sup>13</sup>Peter Way, 'Rebellion of the Regulars: Working Soldiers and the Mutiny of 1763-1764' in *William and Mary Quarterly*, lvii, no. 4 (October, 2000), pp.761-92; Kaushik Roy, 'Coercion through Leniency: British Manipulation of the Courts-Martial System in the Post-Mutiny Indian Army, 1859-1913' in *Journal of Military History*, lxx, no. 4 (October, 2001), pp. 937-64; Dominy, *Last Outpost*, chapter 8; Thomas Bartlett, 'The Connaught Rangers Mutiny India, July 1920' in *History Ireland*, vi, no. 1 (Spring, 1998), pp. 5-7; Thomas Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: the Catholic question 1690-1830* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1992), pp. 182-3.

<sup>14</sup>Way, 'Rebellion of the Regulars', p. 761.

## THE NENAGH MUTINY OF 7-8 JULY 1856

The region was also the scene of ‘the most desperate agrarian crimes in the period’ and this may have, potentially, created men of a more volatile nature.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the Crimean War, as in any year, the Irish military authorities at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham were inundated with reports of mutinous or riotous confrontations. On 3 May 1855 ‘an unfortunate collision’ took place between the regulars of the Clonmel depot and the South Tipperary Artillery. Four months later a ‘party of’ the Galway Militia attacked a police barracks at Loughrea. In July 1856 a ‘collision’ occurred between ‘the townspeople’ of Enniskillen and the Donegal (Militia) Infantry.<sup>16</sup> These are just a sample from a ledger full of similar reports. Yet such outrages were not unique to Irish regiments; similar outbursts were conducted by other British army and militia regiments across the United Kingdom before, during and after the Crimean War. For example, on 13 May 1855 a ‘riot of a very serious character’ occurred at Plymouth between the Royal Marines and the 2nd Royal Cheshire Militia, having developed from ‘disputes at the beer houses in the town’. On 29 May 1856 the 3rd West York Militia became involved in ‘a melee’ with civilians on the quayside at Belfast during their embarkation for Britain.<sup>17</sup> Like Kilmainham, the army authorities at Horse Guards in London would no doubt have received weekly reports of such incidents. It should also be noted that these affrays were not relegated to the home station during the war, but also broke out amongst troops en-route to India and the East during the Russian war. In October 1854 elements of the 50th and 55th Regiments of Foot became insubordinate and violent on board the troopship *Jars* which led to a certain portion of the ship’s water casks being destroyed. Two men were given fifty lashes at sea, with two loaded cannons being trained upon the prisoners and 100 men of the 63rd Foot being appointed as armed sentries over the same.<sup>18</sup>

Despite its chronological proximity to the events in India of 1857-9 the outrage at Nenagh bears no comparison in terms of violence; rather it should be more readily and appropriately compared to events such as that at Natal in 1887 and Solon in 1920 both of which, coincidentally, perhaps, involved Irish regiments. The first involved the

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<sup>15</sup>J.S. Donnelly, Jr., *Landlord and Tenant in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1973), p. 39; W.E. Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Mid-Victorian Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 25.

<sup>16</sup>Circular to officers commanding the depot 2nd Lancers Royal Regt and the South Tipperary Militia Artillery, Kilkenny, 7 May [1855] (Trinity College Dublin, Donoughmore Papers (DP), H/14/3/26); [Unknown] to Lord Seaton, 22 Sept. 1855, 4 Jul. 1856 (National Library of Ireland, Kilmainham Papers (KP), MS 1290).

<sup>17</sup>*Derby Mercury*, 16 May 1855; *Belfast News-Letter*, 30 May 1856.

<sup>18</sup>*Mayo Constitution*, 28 Nov. 1854.

Inniskillings and the second the Connaught Rangers.<sup>19</sup> Taking the latter as an example, and leaving aside the nationalist rhetoric and motivations of that mutiny's leaders, James Daly and Joseph Hawes, the principal reasons for the 1920 mutiny were attributed, by the regimental historian, Bartlett and more recently by Draper, to factors 'within the regiment'. The former argued these to be the fledgling nature of the men: '[e]nlisted in 1919 and shipped out immediately to India', who were then subjected to a 'rigorous training schedule on the plains of the Punjab at the hottest season of the year'.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, and most importantly, Bartlett and Draper both argue that it was principally due to 'poor officer–man relations'; 'their officers had been remarkably irresolute and incompetent'.<sup>21</sup> As will be seen later, such a multitude of similar factors, which Bartlett termed 'combustible material to make a protest', were present amongst most Irish regiments during 1856 and 1920, but only the units that mutinied had the requisite spark – meaning leadership within the men of the militia – to initiate an event.<sup>22</sup> Dominy makes a similar argument for the Inniskillings.<sup>23</sup>

We should also bear in mind that civil and military relations with the militia of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland were not always negative; indeed, multiple reports both in the press and to the military authorities at Dublin illustrate this. On 28 September 1855 Mr Peter A. Flynn, Esq., of Galway sent a memorial to Lord Seaton 'from the inhabitants of Galway', which described their 'favourable opinion of the general conduct of the Galway Militia'. This apparently gave the Commander of the Forces in Ireland, Lord Seaton 'much satisfaction'.<sup>24</sup> Such praise was not solely reserved for a county's own militia regiment. Units from elsewhere in Ireland or Britain were also celebrated by the people of the locality in which they were garrisoned. One example of this was the Kilkenny Fusiliers. In September 1855 they were reported as having become a favourite of the people of Limerick, who regularly turned out to watch and cheer them as they marched with their band.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Response of the Irish Newspapers**

Following the suppression of the Nenagh mutiny, Irish newspapers, especially between 8 and 14 July, expressed a variety of emotions and opinions towards the event and its

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<sup>19</sup>For an overview of the event see Thomas Bartlett, 'The Connaught Rangers Mutiny India, July 1920' in *History Ireland*, vi, no. 1 (Spring, 1998), pp. 5-7. See also Dominy, *Last Outpost*, chapter 8.

<sup>20</sup>Bartlett, 'Rangers Mutiny', p. 5. See also Draper, 'Mutiny under the Sun', p. 12.

<sup>21</sup>Bartlett, 'Rangers Mutiny', p.5; Draper, 'Mutiny under the Sun', p. 3.

<sup>22</sup>Bartlett, 'Rangers Mutiny', pp.5-6; Draper, 'Mutiny under the Sun', p. 21.

<sup>23</sup>Dominy, *Last Outpost*, pp. 93, 100, 105, 107.

<sup>24</sup>James Colborne, Lord Seaton's Military Secretary, to Peter A. Flynn, Esq., 20 Oct. 1855 (KP, MS 1221).

<sup>25</sup>*Limerick Reporter*, 11 Sept. 1855.

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causation. Terms such as ‘calamitous’, ‘disastrous’, ‘lamentable’ and ‘disgrace’ were used in a wide cross-section of newspapers, and although many cast blame upon the government few, except the *Nation* and those like it, actually took pleasure in what had occurred.<sup>26</sup> Eight days after its outbreak the *Limerick Reporter* declared that:

The universal press of Great Britain and Ireland condemns in the most unreserved and unqualified manner the bad faith of the Government in reference to the North Tipperary Light Infantry. Nothing could surpass the folly and short sightedness, if not the criminality and heartlessness, observed towards the Militia generally by the Executive; but the want of common sense and common honesty, in dealing with the Tipperary Regiment in particular were so apparent, that no one is astonished that mutiny has been the result.<sup>27</sup>

Similar anger was expressed in both Louth and Belfast. While the *Dundalk Democrat* declared ‘[t]he whole affair is a disgrace to the government’, the *Belfast News-Letter* of the previous day focussed on the perceived causation. Referring to the regulations issued in the previous April, it described them as ‘unfair’, worthy of ‘indignation’, and ‘derogatory to the character of the government’, which had brought ‘sorrow’ on the people.<sup>28</sup>

Yet, a sense of shame and pity was also very evident across the country and an attempt to try and explain what had happened was paramount in all papers. Although most of the press focussed their attention and energies on analysing the events and pointing the finger of blame, the *Freeman’s Journal* attempted to salvage the reputation of the Tipperary Regiment and the common ‘proverbial’ Tipperary soldier. In Cork the *Southern Reporter* attempted the same for the Irish Militia as a whole.<sup>29</sup> Having described the events at Nenagh as ‘lamentable’, it argued that ‘Ireland ought to be, and is, justly proud; and many of its counties have reason to be proud of the character and formation of the corps raised within them’. The *Southern Reporter* went on to draw attention to the regiment of Kerry, in which ‘a finer body of men no county in Ireland sent to defend its county’. It described the Kerry Militia as having marched ‘in and out of the town, on the eve of premature dis-embodiment, with cheerfulness, contentedness, and obedience pictured in each man’s face’. Not only was a stark ‘contrast’ drawn between the responses of the two regiments to their disembodiment but so was the demeanour of their reciprocal garrison town.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>*Banner of Ulster*, 12 Jul. 1856; *Nation*, 12 Jul. 1856; *Limerick Observer*, 11 Jul. 1856; *Dundalk Democrat*, 12 Jul. 1856.

<sup>27</sup>*Limerick Reporter*, 15 Jul. 1856.

<sup>28</sup>*Dundalk Democrat*, 12 Jul. 1856; *Belfast News-Letter*, 11 Jul. 1855.

<sup>29</sup>*Freeman’s Journal*, 11 Jul. 1856 citing *Limerick Reporter*.

<sup>30</sup>*Cork Southern Reporter*, 12 Jul. 1856.

While ‘every door and window [in Tralee] were filled with anxious and delighted spectators and the streets were lined with confiding friends’, in Nenagh the windows ‘were barred, to prevent desolation and death’. Yet for all ‘their rash and wildly foolish procedure, and their reckless disregard for the lives, and property, and comfort of their own countrymen, in whose town they were located’, some, if not most of the papers did not wish to see the men receive the traditional punishment for mutiny – death.<sup>31</sup> The *Limerick Observer* believed that it was a shame ‘to think that brave men, who yesterday morning arose in health and strength should, for a disputed point, involving the value or the difference of only a few shillings, have had recourse to violence, and have paid the forfeit so suddenly with their lives’.<sup>32</sup> Certainly its county contemporary the *Southern Reporter* believed that their case deserved ‘the utmost leniency, and we hope and trust a merciful view may be taken of it’.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Irish Militia and the Mutiny: Parliament’s Response**

The Irish peoples’ response towards the initial 1854-55 embodiment and recruitment of the Irish Militia (and the need for men to transfer to the regular line regiments) in the press and through their parliamentary representatives in the Lords and the Commons was generally positive in 1854-55. However, the process of disembodiment of those same regiments less than two years later became mired in scandal, initially through protests at the manner in which units were being disembodied and then by the Nenagh mutiny itself.

The Nenagh Mutiny also heightened the temperature of Irish opposition in the Commons; something which had largely remained within the bounds of ‘critical patriotism’ throughout the war.<sup>34</sup> The issues, poor pay and conditions as well as disbandment, that partly instigated the mutiny had been raised on multiple occasions in the preceding month. The government had failed to address these issues and it was this failure which evidently angered certain Irish representatives. Although the mutiny initially caused great consternation among some members in the Commons, mostly amongst those who were militia commanders, it disappeared from the agenda quite quickly; the swift sentencing of the mutineers and the government’s decision not to disband the militias most likely influenced this. Attributing the trouble to what Lord Naas (Conservative MP for Coleraine) described as ‘a few malcontents’ ensured that

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<sup>31</sup>*Freeman’s Journal*, 11 Jul. 1856 citing *Limerick Reporter*.

<sup>32</sup>*Limerick Observer*, 11 Jul. 1856.

<sup>33</sup>*Limerick Reporter*, 15 Jul. 1856.

<sup>34</sup>For more on Irish wartime patriotic criticism see Huddie, *The Crimean War*, chapter 1.

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the majority of the Irish Militia was accepted as being 'perfectly satisfied' and loyal.<sup>35</sup> In comparison, there was no debate over any plan to disembody the Scottish regiments. Two Scottish members did rise to speak during the Irish debates, but only to address the billeting of that force on the Scottish public.<sup>36</sup>

Before and during July 1856, a number of Irish MPs and the Irish representative peer, Viscount Dungannon continuously criticised the manner in which the Irish Militia soldiers were being discharged. They drew attention to the numerous monetary complaints which were rife within the force, the subpar clothing, the loss of bounty money on necessaries and a lack of actual pay.<sup>37</sup> These same issues were exacerbated by the failures of the Tipperary Militia's officers and commander and led to the events at Nenagh.

Like so many other topics which were discussed in parliament during the war, Irish MPs first obtained news of the incident through the press. The first reference to the mutiny in the House, which came from the Liberal MP for Roscommon and Colonel of the Roscommon Militia, Fitzstephen French on 10 July, was an attempt to seek verification from the Under-Secretary of the War Office, Frederick Peel, of what proved to be exaggerated reports in the press.<sup>38</sup> The following day, French illustrated the specifically Irish nature of the event and its underlying grievances. In a direct address to the Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, he declared that 'there was a general feeling in Ireland that the men had not been fairly treated', as their bounty had been paid in 'miserable' instalments and that their pay and treatment had been subpar.<sup>39</sup> French called on Palmerston to override the Secretary of War to ensure that the militia received all that was promised to them. In the opinion of Thomas Dunne, Conservative member for Dungarvan and Lieutenant-Colonel of the Queen's County Militia, both the men's pay and the bounty had been at the very heart of what he termed 'this unfortunate occurrence' at Nenagh.<sup>40</sup> In the Lords too, Irish members, some of whom were also militia commanders, including the Earl of Donoughmore, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Tipperary Artillery regiment, sought either clarification of the event or denounced the government's handling of the disembodiment.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Hansard 3, cxliii, 861 (15 Jul. 1865); Lord Donoughmore to General Eden, 20 Jul. 1855 (DP, H/15/1/77).

<sup>36</sup>Hansard 3, cxliii, 860-2 (15 Jul. 1856), *ibid.*, 1219 (22 Jul. 1856).

<sup>37</sup>Major Bloomfield to Lord Donoughmore, 19 Jul. 1855 (DP, H/15/1/77).

<sup>38</sup>Hansard 3, cxliii, 557 (10 Jul. 1856).

<sup>39</sup>Hansard 3, cxliii, 682-4 (11 Jul. 1856).

<sup>40</sup>Hansard 3, cxliii, 557 (10 Jul. 1856).

<sup>41</sup>Hansard 3, cxliii, 543 (10 Jul. 1856).

On 15 July Dunne continued his line of criticism, declaring that the cause of the incident had been the ‘vacillation’ of the government ‘and its reluctance to do justice, a course of proceeding calculated to injure the military spirit developing itself in Ireland’. He made it clear that he had not minced his words and re-emphasised the charge he was making:

the Department of War was the main cause of what had occurred at Nenagh, for had a little humanity and a little common sense been exercised, the disturbances and discontent that arose would have been avoided’.<sup>42</sup>

Lord Naas, Fitzstephen French and the ‘Independent’ Cork MP John Francis Maguire increased the attack. The latter also declared that ‘[t]he occurrences at Nenagh were solely attributable to the miserable blundering of Government’, while French added that ‘the greatest discontent existed in every Irish militia regiment, in consequence of the way they had been treated and their expectations disappointed’, and used the issue to inquire as to a possible increase in barrack accommodation in Ireland.<sup>43</sup>

Yet, after such exuberant outbursts the issue fizzled out and was not raised again in the Commons, although it got one last hearing in the Lords. On 24 July the Marquis of Clanricarde, commander of the County Galway Militia, who had not addressed the issue previously, rose to inquire as to what punishments were to be issued to the mutineers at Nenagh. He also took the time to testify to the ‘promptitude, energy, and decision which were shown by General Chatterton, the general commanding the district, in putting down the mutiny’.<sup>44</sup>

The interest and passion with which those Irish members responded to the mutiny and the issue of the discharges was not solely due to an Irish patriotic streak, rather, as with most of the British (but more so English) members who responded in a similar fashion during the war, Irish MPs and peers who commented on the issues pertaining to the force did so due to the fact that they held commissions in the Irish Militia regiments. Such men included the Conservative Viscount Bernard, Colonel of the Cork City Artillery Militia, and Lord Arthur Edwin Hill Trevor, Lieutenant-Colonel in the South Down Militia, the Liberal James Molyneux Caulfield, Lieutenant-Colonel in the Tyrone Militia, and Daniel O’Connell II, a Captain in the Kerry Militia, and even the Independent Fulke Greville-Nugent, a Colonel and William Pollard-Urquhart, a Major in the Westmeath Militia.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Hansard 3, cxliii, 860 (15 Jul. 1856).

<sup>43</sup>Hansard 3, cxliii, 861-2 (15 Jul. 1856).

<sup>44</sup>Hansard 3, cxliii, 1347-8 (24 Jul. 1856).

<sup>45</sup>*Hart’s Army List, 1855*, p. 263; *ibid.*, 1856, pp. 349-57.

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### **Response of Lord Seaton and the Irish Executive**

The mutiny was an isolated affair largely instigated by a combination of local factors. However, subsequent measures initiated by the Irish military and civil authorities not only ensured there was no additional discontent but guaranteed that other regiments, like the North Tipperary Militia, returned to their homes in ‘remarkably good’ temper.<sup>46</sup> In contrast to both Natal and Solon, no mutineers were executed after Nenagh. In the former, had the ringleader been granted clemency that would have implied nothing less than a censure by the Crown on army discipline in Natal.<sup>47</sup> While in the latter, as Bartlett put it, ‘in the eyes of the authorities, [the ringleader James] Daly had to die, not for Ireland, but for India’ – due to the ‘historical resonance of the word “mutiny”’.<sup>48</sup> At Nenagh, by contrast, a surprising degree of astuteness and consequently leniency was demonstrated.

While Irish parliamentarians and the Irish press may have voiced displeasure and concerns regarding the event within their respective spheres, the principal respondent to the entire affair was Lord Seaton, Commander of both Army and Militia in Ireland. Having received the report of the mutiny Seaton’s initial response was to telegraph Major-General Sir James Charles Chatterton, Commander of the Limerick District, and the commanders of the nearest regiments (41st, 47th and 55th Foot) in the garrison towns of Birr and Templemore, with the aim of quelling the riot.<sup>49</sup> Following its successful suppression Seaton recommended to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the 7th Earl of Carlisle, that it was ‘expedient’ that ‘[a] few examples’ be made of the mutineers in order to ‘mark the misconduct of a corps nearly all the men of which were implicated in the atrocious outrages committed’.

However, as David Murphy argues, a considerable amount of leniency was shown.<sup>50</sup> In fact the mutineers were informed of this by Major-General Chatterton when he visited them in Nenagh prison on 1 September 1856.<sup>51</sup> This was because Carlisle felt it apposite to show mercy to the guilty parties, who received a variety of sentences

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<sup>46</sup>Major-General J.C. Chatterton to the Dept. Adj. Gen., Dublin, 1 Sept. 1856 (CSORP, 20793).

<sup>47</sup>Dominy, *Last Outpost*, p. 105.

<sup>48</sup>Bartlett, ‘Rangers Mutiny’, p. 7. Similarly, Draper argues that the authorities were happy to blame Sinn Féin infiltration for the outrage, instead of ‘post-war institutional failings’ within the unit and broader service. Draper, ‘Mutiny under the Sun’, p. 21.

<sup>49</sup>Mil. Sec. to Thomas Lacrom, 10 Jul. 1856 (CSORP, MS 17074).

<sup>50</sup>Murphy, *The Crimean War*, p. 204.

<sup>51</sup>On 1 September Major-General Chatterton visited the mutineers in Nenagh prison and informed them that ‘leniency’ was to be offered them ‘by the executive’. Major-General J.C. Chatterton to the Colonel R.B. Wood, Dublin, 1 Sept. 1856 (CSORP, 20793).

ranging from transportation for life (later commuted) to two years in prison with hard labour, instead of death.<sup>52</sup> This stood in stark contrast to other mutinies, after which men were flogged in front of their units or the leaders were executed for the purposes of setting an example.<sup>53</sup> Seaton, in contrast, followed up what might be termed as his 'stick' approach with a 'carrot'.

Seaton also made considerable efforts to ensure there was no repeat of the events elsewhere in Ireland and that the rest of the regiment was spared.<sup>54</sup> Having decided against disbanding the North Tipperary regiment, which he had initially considered a fitting punishment, Seaton ordered that the unit simply be disembodied like its peer units elsewhere in Ireland and in Britain. This was to be preceded by the addressing of the mutiny issue at the regiment's last parade. This was done in the officer's speech, in order to remove any 'misapprehensions which have been alleged in extenuation of the insubordinate conduct of the corps'.<sup>55</sup> Seaton also issued a new circular to all the militia colonels explicitly explaining 'the amount [of enlistment bounty and pay] which militia men will be entitled to receive whether he accept the indulgence already offered or remain with his corps till authorised to be disembodied'.<sup>56</sup> Finally, Seaton 'strongly recommend[ed]' to the Under-Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Thomas Larcom, that given the 'worn out' state of the men's clothing, the County Lord Lieutenants, who presided over the militia regiments, 'might authorize the gratuity allowance to be expended in the purchase of clothing'. This would be done alongside the payment of all outstanding wages. In Seaton's opinion, this had to be done 'without delay', so that the men 'may be dismissed in a state which will not call forth the compassion of the country'.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>The Lord Lieutenant of Ireland had the 'prerogative of mercy' see R. B. McDowell, *The Irish administration 1801-1914* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), p.52. See also Memorandum for the Military Department to be communicated to the government, 1 Aug. 1856 (CSORP, MS 20790).

<sup>53</sup>In 1762 the 45th Regiment's commander had three mutineers flogged 'for mutinous behaviour in front of the assembled troops, after giving them "the form of a Trial", the Example was absolutely necessary, to Strike a Terror', while after the Connaught Rangers revolt at Solon in 1920, 'it was almost entirely for Indian reasons that James Daly's sentence was confirmed and carried out'. Way, 'Rebellion of the Regulars', p.773; Bartlett, 'Rangers Mutiny', p. 7.

<sup>54</sup>Memorandum from Seaton to Larcom, 20 Jul. 1856 (CSORP, 17074).

<sup>55</sup>Colonel R. B. Wood, to Major-General Sir James Chatterton, Bart., 29 Aug. 1856 (CSORP, 22042).

<sup>56</sup>James Colborne to Larcom, 5 Aug. 1856 (N CSORP, 20791).

<sup>57</sup>Colborne to Larcom (CSORP, 20791).

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Taking Roy's argument relative to the Indian Army and applying to the Irish Militia context, the course taken after Nenagh can be seen as an example of the broader modern era 'movement in Western societies towards greater leniency in military punishment'.<sup>58</sup> Equally his argument that moderate punishment both within the Indian Army and the British 'metropolitan armies' was the principal binding agent that facilitated a functional and trustworthy 'professional institution' is equally applicable. Any 'overreaction' in terms of discipline and punishment was counterproductive. The aftermath of the Indian Mutiny or the 'tightening of discipline' in the Bengal Army in 1857, which he argued led to the mutiny, are prime examples.<sup>59</sup> Equally, it is argued here that the leniency shown after Nenagh was made possible by the socio-political state of Ireland at the time. Unlike India in 1920, where tensions remained high due to both the 1919 Amritsar Massacre and the on-going non-cooperation movement, and which ensured that the mutiny leader James Day 'had to die'; Ireland in 1856 was perhaps at its most tranquil during the Union period.<sup>60</sup>

### **The Court of Inquiry**

The popular opinion of the Irish public, the press and the politicians at Westminster in the wake of the mutiny, was that the militiamen had been motivated by a perception of being 'badly treated by the Government'. The men were to be sent 'away without receiving the balance of their bounty' and consequently they were to have 'no means of living or purchasing clothing or implements for work'.<sup>61</sup> In contrast the Court of Inquiry, which assembled in the month following the mutiny, found that the event had in fact been instigated by a combination of factors, not simply a grievance over pay. The first of these was that by July 1856 the uniforms of the men were 'worn & perfectly ragged'. This was partially due to the delay in obtaining new issues and partly due to wear and tear, which ensured that they were reluctant to part with their good clothes, especially the new black trousers. The second was a misguided decision of the regiment's commanding officer, Colonel Maude, to demand that the men return those very trousers in response to rumours 'that they were making away with their [them]' and having removed the stripe from the legs were selling them for a profit. And this at a time when his rank-and-file were of a volatile temperament.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Roy, 'Coercion through Leniency', p. 963.

<sup>59</sup>Roy, 'Coercion through Leniency', p. 963.

<sup>60</sup>I have inferred this in Huddie, *The Crimean War*, p. 55 & 192, while this argument has also been made for the period c.1902-1910 in Pat Walsh, *The Rise and Fall of Imperial Ireland: Redmondism in the context of Britain's conquest of South Africa and its Great War on Germany 1899-1916* (Belfast: Athol Books, 2003), p. 7. See Bartlett, 'Rangers Mutiny', p.6. For Draper's opinion see 'Mutiny under the Sun', pp. 1-2.

<sup>61</sup>Colonel Maude to the Military Secretary, Kilmainham, 7 Jul. 1856 (CSORP, 16431).

<sup>62</sup>Colonel R. B. Wood, to Larcom, 1 Aug. 1856 (CSORP, 20792).

The third, and final factor was the failure of the officers to properly inform the men of the regulations and pay provisions to be afforded them on their dismissal or disembodiment under the regulations of 1 September 1854 and the Circular of 3 July 1856. It was Lord Seaton's opinion that the men of the Tipperary Militia 'who returned to their homes, and who had served 28 days, could claim, and should, upon their dismissal, have received the 10s.'

which they were entitled to and that 'there should have been no doubt whatever in the North Tipperary Militia that these regulations became applicable to men who proceeded to their homes under the authority of the circulars of the 3rd July'.<sup>63</sup>

It was the conclusion of the Court of Inquiry that 'the regimental order directing the general collection of the black trousers, almost simultaneously with the promulgation of the circular of July 3rd was most injudicious, and calculated to induce erroneous impressions as to the its meaning', even if it had been done for the perceived 'good of the public service'.<sup>64</sup> As a result of the inquiries made by the Court, which comprised of its President, Colonel William Irwin (of the Staff), and Members, Brevet Major Hume (55th Foot), Major Armstrong (County Clare Militia), Major Sir Richard De Burgh, Bart., (Limerick County Militia) and Major Warburton (King's County Militia), 'a very unfavourable opinion' of the officers of the regiment was formed. Moreover, it was determined that they were essentially the cause of the mutiny. The court had 'no doubt that the officers rather encouraged the demonstration on the part of the N. Tipperary Militia, suspecting that the Secretary for War had permitted men to return to their homes before the disembodiment of their regiments merely to get rid of their claim for bounty and gratuity allowance'. Dominy and Bartlett make similar arguments relative to causation for the Inniskillings' and Rangers' mutinies. Yet, it should also be noted that the very poor state of their uniforms was also due to a delay in the issue of new clothing owing to a mistake by the 'clothier' hired to make them – a factor beyond the officers' control.<sup>65</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Mutinies and affrays were a long established and regular aspect of British military life, where 'issues such as the non-payment of wages, harsh work conditions, insufficient or poor-quality provisions, or unfair treatment by officers' were frequently the cause.

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<sup>63</sup>Proceedings of the Court of Inquiry, 1 Aug. 1856 (CSORP, 20792, Memorandum No. 2). Emphasis as per the document.

<sup>64</sup>Proceedings of the Court of Inquiry, 1 Aug. 1856 (CSORP, Memo. No. 2).

<sup>65</sup>Dep. Adj. Gen. R.B. Wood, to Larcom, 1 Aug. 1856 (CSORP, 20792); James Colborne to Larcom, 5 Aug. 1856 (CSORP, 20791).

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Nenagh was, as Way has argued more generally, no different to ‘many mutinies’ in the modern era, being just one more labour dispute within the military context.<sup>66</sup>

The Nenagh Mutiny shared many characteristics with other mutinies and affrays in the eighteenth, nineteenth and even early twentieth centuries. However, it had its own special attributes. In the context of the early 1920s Bartlett described Irish regiments as having all possessed the ‘combustible material to make a protest,’ and where they only needed a spark. Based on the protests in parliament and the newspapers relative to the government’s disembodiment policy, a similar argument might be made about the Irish Militia in 1856.<sup>67</sup> Like Natal and Solon after it, the right additional factor was also in place at Nenagh to ensure ignition – leadership within the mutineers.

None of the multitude of other affrays and outrages that occurred during the Crimean War across the island of Ireland, and which are documented in the Kilmainham Papers, received any public sympathy. Instead they caused great annoyance to the military authorities, the police and the local populace and those soldiers who were involved were vilified and castigated. In stark contrast to this trend, and more reflective of events that occurred at Natal some thirty-one years later, the Nenagh Mutiny of July 1856 received substantial sympathy from multiple sources. The mutineers were defended and even heralded by a cross-section of the Irish press, while a similar cross-section of militia-affiliated Irish MPs and peers defended their actions in parliament. They used the mutineers’ actions and the incident as a stick to beat the government with over its post-war demobilisation (or disembodiment) policy. Even the military Court of Inquiry found in their favour, laying the blame for the mutiny at the feet of the unit’s officers. While the two most senior men in Ireland – Lords Carlisle and Seaton – showed both tact and leniency towards those involved; and especially to the ten mutineers chosen for punishment.

The Nenagh Mutiny was a part of the Crimean War – the unit involved had been re-embodied in 1855 to provide extra manpower for the war, partly for home defence, but more so for transfers to line regiments. Nenagh also differed little from former and later affrays; such as those in the American colonies in 1763-4, or Natal in 1887 and at Solon in 1920.<sup>68</sup> But it was not solely a response to the Russian war and its events or issues; nor even against the clumsy attempt of the Palmerston government to disembody the Irish Militia. Rather, it was another example of a long-established

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<sup>66</sup>Way, ‘Rebellion of the Regulars’, p. 772.

<sup>67</sup>Bartlett, ‘Rangers Mutiny’, p. 6.

<sup>68</sup>For more on the re-embodiment of the Irish Militia and its purpose and contribution to regular recruitment during the Crimean War see Paul Huddie, ‘British military recruitment in Ireland during the Crimean War, 1854-6’ in *British Journal of Military History*, ii, no. 1 (October, 2015), pp. 34-54.

tradition of soldiers expressing their vexation with equally long-established and recurrent grievances. These were simply given a Crimean veneer, just as Solon has been often been given a patina of Irish Nationalist discontent. In both instances the causes were common and existed within a long history of mutiny in the British Army. However, the combined popular sympathy manifest by the Irish press, parliamentarians (both peers and commoners) and by the Irish political and military executive in 1856 was most certainly uncommon and hence is worthy of note; and renders it necessary to more fully understand this event within the broader history of mutiny in the British Army in the modern period.

# Military Identification: Identity Discs and the Identification of British War Dead, 1914-18

SARAH I. ASHBRIDGE\*

University of Huddersfield, UK

Email: [Sarah.Ashbridge@hud.ac.uk](mailto:Sarah.Ashbridge@hud.ac.uk)

## ABSTRACT

*Following the ratification of the 1906 Geneva Convention, in August the British Army approved the design for its first identity disc which was designed to assist with the identification of dead or wounded soldiers. A 1914 decision to produce the discs from compressed fibre rather than from aluminium resulted in an inability to identify thousands of soldiers during and after the First World War and it remained a problem despite the introduction of the double identity disc in 1916, created at the insistence of Sir Fabian Ware, founder of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. This article reflects upon the development of the British identity disc system between 1906-1916 and considers why so many soldiers became 'unknown'.*

## Introduction

The 'Great War' introduced new methods of warfare including tanks, prolonged periods of trench warfare and gas attacks. Industrial warfare had a devastating impact on not only the landscape, but on the bodies of men. Within only a few months of war, issues with the burial of the dead and the absence of a system to record battlefield burials became apparent to the British Army. The single identity disc introduced by the British Army in 1906 was designed to be removed from the body in the event of death, leaving the body unidentifiable at a later date. In some cases, immediate burial was not possible due to the intensity of fighting, or the movement of units in the field, leaving corpses to rot for weeks, months or years before they were attended to for burial. In these cases, the presence of an identifying object upon the body was essential to prevent the creation of an 'unknown soldier'. As the numbers of missing and unknown soldiers began to rise, civilian expectations of a military burial began to change, with a preference for an individual grave for soldiers of all ranks - as opposed to the traditional use of communal trenches for the burial of soldiers below the rank of officer. Sir Fabian Ware, founder of what is now known as the Commonwealth War

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\*Sarah Ashbridge is a doctoral candidate at the University of Huddersfield  
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Graves Commission (CWGC) is a pivotal character in this story, as he was not only the mediator who argued for an equal treatment of the war dead, but the man who facilitated the introduction of a double identity disc with one to be left with the body to aid future identification.

In August 1914, the maximum age of enlistment was just thirty-eight; at forty-five years of age, Fabian Ware was too old to enlist as a soldier..<sup>1</sup> “Old age” was not enough to deter Ware, who was determined not ‘to sit idly by’.<sup>2</sup> Lord Alfred Milner, under whom Fabian had previously worked in the Orange River Colony in South Africa, assisted him by arranging a ‘profitable meeting’ with Lt. Col. Stewart of the British Red Cross.<sup>3</sup> The meeting was successful, and it was decided that Ware would take command of a mobile ambulance unit in France.<sup>4</sup> He arrived in France on the afternoon of 19 September 1914 ‘with practically the first unit of ambulances’, sent out ‘under permission’ from Lord Kitchener to search for wounded and missing British officers and men following the Battle of Mons.<sup>5</sup> This ‘naturally’ led to the finding of graves, many of which were inadequately marked and with some completely unidentifiable.<sup>6</sup> To Ware and his unit ‘it was obvious that if something were not done immediately to preserve the records they would inevitably become forever obliterated’, and so they began to build wooden crosses which they would stencil to ensure the identity of the soldier was not lost.<sup>7</sup> As the work of the mobile ambulance unit became ‘more in the nature of routine work’, the amount of time dedicated to locating graves increased.<sup>8</sup> The President of St John’s Ambulance, Carlile, took notice of this work, providing additional cars and time which allowed them to greatly increase the scope of the unit’s

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<sup>1</sup>This was raised to forty in 1915; Peter Simkins, *Kitchener’s Army: The Raising of the New Armies* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2007), p. 127.

<sup>2</sup>Lt. Col. Ralph Stephenson TD., ‘Maj. Gen. Sir Fabian Ware KCVO. KBE. CB. CMG.’, *The Friends of the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum Newsletter*, Spring 2018, p.17. <https://www.soldiersofglos.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/2018-spring-newsletter.pdf>. Accessed 1 July 2019.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p17.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p17.

<sup>5</sup>Phillip Longworth, *The Unending Vigil: The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2003), p. 3; Commonwealth War Graves Commission Archive (CWGC), ADD 4/1/3 Red Cross Record File 388a: Mr Fabian Ware’s Mobile Unit; CWGC, CWGC/1/1/1/25, Col. Stewart’s Report on his Visit to Major Fabian Ware’s Unit, Graves Registration Commission, ‘Major Ware’s Mobile Unit’, p.1.

<sup>6</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/25, Col. Stewart’s Report, p.1.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p.1

<sup>8</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/20, Letter from C.H. Langston Cazalet to Lt. Colonel Stewart, M.D., 8 March 1915.

## IDENTITY DISCS AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF BRITISH WAR DEAD, 1914-18

work.<sup>9</sup> Eventually, the work came to the attention of Nevil Macready, Adjutant-General of the British Expeditionary Force. Macready asked Ware to provide details of all the graves so far registered. He was sympathetic to Ware's work as he remembered the scandal over the lack of care for graves in the Boer War, which was regarded as a symbol 'of national humiliation', akin to the Army's sack of San Sebastián during the Peninsular War.<sup>10</sup>

On 27 February 1915, Macready wrote to Ian Malcolm, an officer of the British Red Cross, who was also working to repair and record graves on the Western Front, explaining that 'an organisation has been started and will be in working order during the next few days to take up the whole question of the locality, marking and registration of all graves belonging to men of the British Army'.<sup>11</sup> In March 1915 Ware's unit was formally recognised as the Graves Registration Commission, and was transferred to the British Army under the direct control of the Adjutant-General's office at General Headquarters in France.<sup>12</sup> The Commission was tasked with locating and registering existing graves, and assigning to graves registration officers the duties of the preliminary marking and recording of graves. Graves registration officers worked in close contact with chaplains and officers responsible for burials to ensure that the soldiers recorded in burial records matched the descriptions held in unit records. This meant that an 'elaborate' system for the exchange of information was required.<sup>13</sup>

Arguably the true value of the Commission remained unclear until the end of 1915, when it 'became increasingly evident that there was a large demand on the part of the public for detailed information regarding the location of graves, and it was thought desirable to use some means of centralising these enquiries, and including an enquiry branch in the work entrusted to the Commission'.<sup>14</sup> There was an overwhelming rush of enquiries from the general public upon the opening of the enquiry branch, causing Ware to move the Commission headquarters to London where the administration was performed by civilians, leaving only the executive headquarters office in France to deal with the administration of graves registration units.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>David Crane, *Empires of the Dead: How One Man's Vision Led to the Creation of WWI's War Graves* (London: William Collins, 2013), p. 9; Longworth, *Unending Vigil*, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/25, 'Col. Stewart's Report'.

<sup>12</sup>'The Registration and Care of Military Graves During the Present War, *Royal United Services Institution Journal*, Vol. 62, Issue 446 (1917), p. 299.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 299.

Ware continued to liaise with the French government as his role now included the development of shared cemeteries for fallen British and French soldiers. This led to discussion about the use of two identity discs in early 1916, and not long after the Graves Registration Commission was renamed the Directorate of Graves Registration & Enquiries in February 1916.<sup>16</sup> By this point, the difficulties in burying the dead were becoming innumerable. The absence of identity discs on fallen soldiers meant that soldiers could not be identified when they were initially buried or exhumed later for concentration into a more permanent cemetery. For the British public, the experience of mass loss combined with a lack of knowledge on the destruction resulted in a growing symbolic reliance on the presence of a marked grave. Where possible, a simple wooden cross would be used to mark each grave, with the soldier's details inscribed directly onto the cross, or pressed into thin strips of metal which were fixed to the cross. In the absence of a wooden cross, anything recognizable would be used including upturned rifles (Figure 1), screw pickets, barbed wire stakes, notes in sealed glass bottles, aeroplane parts such as wheel axles (Figure 2) and even wooden ration boxes.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/34/18, Directorate Of Graves Registration And Enquiries: File 18 - Scheme for Duplicate Identity discs.

<sup>17</sup>Alastair H. Fraser & Martin Brown, 'Mud, blood and missing men: excavations at Serre, Somme, France', *Journal of Conflict Archaeology*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2007), p. 158; J. P. P. Ganschow, 'Identification of the fallen: The supply of "dog tags" to soldiers as a commandment of the laws of war', *New Zealand Armed Forces Law Review*, Volume 9. (2009), pp. 22-54; Frederick Kenyon, *War Graves: How the Cemeteries Abroad Will be Designed* (London: HMSO, 1918); Andrew Robertshaw & David Kenyon, *Digging the Trenches: The Archaeology of the Western Front* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2008); Michael Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How we Recover, Identify, Bury and Honour Our Military Fallen* (Columbia University Press, 2007); Ross Wilson, 'The Burial of the Dead: The British Army on the Western Front, 1914-18', *War & Society*, Vol. 31, Issue 1 (2012), p. 36.

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Figure 1: Grave of an unknown British soldier near Ginchy, 1916. Courtesy of National Army Museum (NAM) – NAM.2007.-03-7-158.



Figure 2: "The grave of one of our air man" - postcard from author's personal collection.

In spite of Ware's work to ensure that every burial was correctly recorded, a huge number of soldiers would have no known grave. Between 4 August 1914 and 30 September 1919, 573,507 were "killed in action, died from wounds and died of other causes", with an additional 99,868 still reported as missing.<sup>18</sup> In 1937, Fabian Ware reflected on the work of the Commission during and after the Great War, stating that the Commission had 'never forgotten that their whole policy should be based on, and built up round, the sanctity both of the individual grave and of the name and memory of the man who has no known grave'.<sup>19</sup> Ware created an empire for the fallen, providing an equal burial for every soldier, whether named or unknown, transforming both military burial traditions and the administrative practice of graves registration.

Though Fabian Ware's role in the development of the CWGC has been well researched, his role in the development of the 1916 double identity disc, has been overlooked, and therefore his contribution to the development of both graves registration practice and military equipment has been undervalued.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, in spite of Ware's innovative methods of engaging with the British Army on behalf of the nation, the compressed fibre material from which the 1914 and 1916 model British identity discs were produced would render them unfit for purpose, as their rapid decomposition allowed for the creation of unknown soldiers, even in cases where a burial had taken place. This paper will investigate how the British identity disc developed between 1907 and 1916 and how the discs failed in their mission to ensure every British soldier was identifiable in death.

### **The First British Identity Disc**

Identity discs had been utilised in multiple wars during the long nineteenth century, including the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), the American Civil War (1861-65), the Taiping Civil War (1850-64) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5). Internationally, anxieties over the strength of military forces and large numbers of casualties incurred during war fuelled the development of shared humanitarian ideals.<sup>21</sup> The impact of artillery and small arms with increased effective range had led to a widening interval between the lines, often leaving an 'impassable' zone littered with wire entanglements,

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<sup>18</sup>The Army Council. General Annual Report of the British Army 1912–1919. Parliamentary Paper 1921, XX, Cmd.1193., Part IV pp. 62–72; note, the report states 254,176 missing less 154,308 released prisoners giving a total of 99,868 missing.

<sup>19</sup>Fabian W. G. Ware, *The Immortal Heritage: An account of the work and policy of the Imperial War Graves Commission during twenty years, 1917-37* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937).

<sup>20</sup>Crane, *Empires of the Dead*; Longworth, *Unending Vigil*.

<sup>21</sup>Rebecca Gill, 'The Origins of the British Red Cross Society and the politics and practices of relief in war, 1870-1906', *Asclepio*, 66 (1), p2. DOI:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.3989/asclepio.2014.03>

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mines, trenches and more, creating new difficulties in responding to the deceased.<sup>22</sup> On 6 July 1906 the terms of the Geneva Convention of 1906 were agreed, with new requirements for the occupant of the field to take measures to protect the bodies of the fallen from 'ill treatment' and to examine the deceased for any identifying marks or military papers of identification before burial.<sup>23</sup>

Soon after the convention, pattern 6444/1906 for the 'disc, identity, aluminium' was approved by the British Army on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1906. This was followed by the approval of pattern 6453/1906 'cord' in September 1906. The aluminium identity disc was officially released to those on active service in place of Army Form B 2067, or 'Description Card for Active Service' following the release of Army Order 9 on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1907. The order instructed that 'identity discs will be regarded as an article of kit and issued as such to serving soldiers and reservists on mobilisation. They will be stored by officers commanding units – (a) for service soldiers at home and abroad. (b) for reservists who rejoin units direct'.<sup>24</sup> The discs measured approximately 35mm in diameter and were produced from a thin sheet of aluminium. Once fitted with a cord the discs were to be worn around the neck under the clothing. Officers commanding units were to forward indents (requisition forms) to the Army Ordnance Department for discs, cord and stamps required for marking the discs. Using 'stamps, steel, for metal, 1/8 inch', the discs were 'kept ready marked showing the soldier's number, rank, name, regiment and religious denomination'.<sup>25</sup> Upon a change of rank or regiment, a new disc would be marked, and the old disc disposed of. The cord was delivered 'in bulk, cut regimentally into lengths of 42 inches, and stored with the discs'.

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<sup>22</sup>C. S. Sperry, 'The Revision of the Geneva Convention, 1906', *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association*, vol. 3, Third Annual Meeting (1906), p. 37.

<sup>23</sup>George B. Davis, 'The Geneva Convention of 1906', *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 1, No.2, (April 1907), p. 415; Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field (Signed 6 July 1906, entered into force 9 August 1907) (1907), Art. 3; Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field (Signed 6 July 1906, entered into force 9 August 1907) (1907), Art. 4.

<sup>24</sup>Note that no list of approved religions or abbreviations of religions was provided. Army Order 9 1907, Army Orders January 1907.

<sup>25</sup>For information on the stamps, AO9 refers the reader to Army Order 17 of 1907. Army Order 9 1907, Army Orders January 1907.

8  
Army Orders.—January, 1907.

A.O. 8. Forage Allowance.—In accordance with paragraph 165 of the Allowance Regulations, it is notified that the following rates of money allowance in lieu of forage will be issued in the United Kingdom and the Channel Islands from 1st January, 1907, until further orders:—

No.	Command, &c.	For each ration.
1	Aldershot Command .. ..	s. d. 1 6
2	Eastern Command .. ..	1 6
3	Irish Command .. ..	1 8
4	London District .. ..	1 6
5	Northern Command .. ..	1 5
6	Scottish Command .. ..	1 5
7	Southern Command .. ..	1 6
8	Western Command .. ..	1 6
9	Channel Islands .. ..	2 1

Army Order 169 of 1906 is cancelled.

A.O. 9. Identity Discs—Regular Forces.—1. An identity disc (aluminium) fitted with a cord (42 inches in length) to be worn round the neck under the clothing has been approved for use on active service, in lieu of the description card (Army Form B 2067) hitherto in use.

2. Identity discs will be regarded as an article of kit and issued as such to serving soldiers and reservists on mobilization. They will be stored by officers commanding units—

- (a) for serving soldiers at home and abroad.
- (b) for reservists who rejoin units direct.

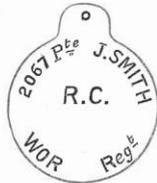
For reservists who rejoin at depôts the discs will be stored with their necessaries.

In the case of reservists belonging to a Cavalry regiment stationed abroad, these discs will be held by the officer commanding the affiliated regiment at home. When both regiments of a group are abroad, the discs of their serving soldiers at home, and of their reservists, will be held by the officer commanding the provisional depôt.

9  
Army Orders.—January, 1907.

When soldiers are transferred to the Army Reserve, their identity discs will be passed by the officer commanding their unit to the officer i/c records, who will forward each man's disc to the depôt or unit which he will rejoin on mobilization.

3. Identity discs will be kept ready marked, showing the soldier's number, rank, name, regiment, and religious denomination, as follows:—



4. The stamping will be carried out with "stamp steel, for metal  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch," issuable under the Equipment Regulations as amended by Army Order 17 of 1907.

Indents should be at once put forward on the Army Ordnance Department for the stamps required to complete to the revised scales.

5. On change of rank, a new disc will be marked. In the case of recruits, the allowance for marking the free kit will cover the cost of stamping the discs; in other cases a charge of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. each will be allowed. Indents for discs and cords should be forwarded to the clothing depôt, supplying the district. The cord will be issued in bulk, cut regimentally into lengths of 42 inches, and stored with the discs.

V. Designation of Volunteer Infantry Brigades.—The A.O. 10. "Harwich Volunteer Infantry Brigade" will, in future, be known as the "Suffolk Volunteer Infantry Brigade." 1907. The Appendix (page 27) to Army Order 120 of 1906 will be amended accordingly.

Figure 3: "Identity Discs – Regular Forces", Army Order 9 1907 – Army Orders, 1907 (1908); War Office, January 1, 1908. (London: Harrison and Sons), p.9

On 1 May 1907, Army Order 102 was released, cancelling Army Order 9 of 1907. The order removed the requirement to include a soldier's rank on the discs. The illustration included no longer featured the use of smaller, italicised letters on the abbreviated regiment. The order provided more detailed instructions on where the discs were to be stored:

- (i.) For serving soldiers at home and abroad, by officers commanding units
- (ii.) For reservists who rejoin at depots on mobilization, by officers commanding depots.
- (iii.) For reservists who rejoin units direct on mobilization, by officers i/c records.<sup>26</sup>

Upon mobilization, identity discs held at record offices were transmitted to the unit in which the reservist had been allocated. Army Order 83 of May 1908 provided

<sup>26</sup>Army Order 102 April 1907.

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instructions for the stamping and storage of discs issued to soldiers in the Special Reserve. For every special reservist, a disc would be marked with the name of the unit and held by the officer commanding the unit. 'On mobilization being ordered', the disc would 'be completed' by stamping the special reservist's regimental number, name and religious denomination.<sup>27</sup> Presumably, these amendments were introduced in order to reduce the need to re-issue discs if a soldier was promoted or transferred units during times of peace. Still, no list of religious abbreviations was provided. Army Order 38 of February 1909 instructed that officers commanding units of the Territorial Force should also ensure that their soldier's discs should be partially marked for completion upon mobilization. 'In peace', the discs of 'every officer, non-commissioned officer and man on the establishment, including the permanent staff' would be stamped with the name of the unit and held by the officer commanding the Territorial Force unit. Once mobilized, the disc would be completed with the regimental number, name and religious denomination.<sup>28</sup>

These army orders provided no detailed instructions on how soldiers should use identity discs once mobilized, stipulating only that they were to be worn around the neck. Identity discs had been introduced in order to meet the political requirements of the 1906 Geneva Convention, which required each nation to provide identifying papers or marks, yet official communications on identity discs had included no information on when an identity disc should be removed, or who it should be forwarded to. This was remedied in 1909 with the release of Army Field Service Regulations Part II (FSR). Section 16 confirmed that duties relating to 'burying parties and places' were the responsibility of the Adjutant General's Branch of the Staff. The burial of soldiers was an acknowledged duty and responsibility of the British Army. Section 133 (3) stipulated that

Anyone concerned in burying a soldier, or finding a body after an action, will remove the identity disc and paybook...and will note the number of the equipment and rifle, or any other means likely to assist identification.<sup>29</sup>

Information about men reported as dead, wounded or missing was to be entered on to Army Form B 103. 'Once a confirmation of death had been confirmed, the information should be reported on Army Form B 2090a which should be rendered to the proper authorities, with the will of the deceased if available.'<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Army Order 83, May 1908.

<sup>28</sup>Army Order 38, February 1909.

<sup>29</sup>Field Service Regulations, Part II, Organization and Administration, 1909, (London: HMSO, 1913), p. 167.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

The pay book and identity disc of a deceased soldier, and any personal effects which may have sentimental value, will be sent with the least possible delay, by the officer under whose immediate command he was when he became non-effective, to the A.G.'s [Adjutant General] office at the base. The officer in charge of the A.G.'s office at the base is responsible that the pay book, small book, if any, and all available documents and effects are searched for a copy of the will left by the deceased.... The other effects will be forwarded to the officer in charge of records concerned.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to the provision of a physical identifying 'mark', FSR demonstrated a chain of accountability for the forwarding of the personal effects of deceased soldiers in order to confirm the death of a soldier. The identity disc was now embedded into the both the regulatory framework and the administrative structure of the British Army, but in reality, 1906-1914 was a peaceful period and there was limited opportunity to test the administrative procedure and the knowledge of lower ranked soldiers before the outbreak of war.

### **The 1914 Fibre Identity Disc**

On 4 August 1914, Britain declared war on Germany. Earl Kitchener was appointed Secretary of the State for War on 5 August 1914, and on the next day, he sought parliamentary approval to increase the size of the army by 500,000 men.<sup>32</sup> On the 7 August, Kitchener appealed for 100,000 men to join the army, which was quickly renamed the 'First New Army' by the War Office.<sup>33</sup> The appeals for volunteers, recruited in five waves of 100,000 were met with such a great response that additional recruiting offices were opened to speed up the process, and within three months, the final recruitment drive was complete, and the '5<sup>th</sup> New Army' was sanctioned.<sup>34</sup>

The order to mobilize meant that the pre-marked aluminium identity discs were to be brought out of storage for the first time, and stamping completed where appropriate. New recruits would also receive an identity disc. On 21 August 1914, pattern 8111/1914 for a new fibreboard identity disc was approved. The new disc measured approximately 35mm in diameter and was produced from vulcanised asbestos fibre. The disc was to be hung from a cord and worn around the neck, as with previous models. The discs were to be stamped in accordance with Army Order 102 of 1907. Though the appearance of the disc had changed, the practical use of the disc remained the same – they were to be worn beneath the uniform, and if a fallen comrade was

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>32</sup>Richard Holmes, *Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front*, (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), p. 138.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

## IDENTITY DISCS AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF BRITISH WAR DEAD, 1914-18

discovered, his identity discs should be removed and returned to the officer commanding the unit, thus beginning the administrative process to confirm the soldier's death. The decision to produce identity discs from compressed fibre rather than aluminium has proved a source of confusion for modern historians. In 2009, David O'Mara initially reported that fibre was selected to replace aluminium when 'it was realised that it would be practically impossible to keep up with the demand (and expense of) aluminium discs', and so fibre was introduced as a cheaper alternative.<sup>35</sup> However having checked the costing for materials provided in the *Priced Vocabulary of Clothing and Necessaries (including Materials)* of 1913 and 1915 published by HM Stationary Office, O'Mara has more recently confirmed that this is incorrect, and that vulcanised fibre was in fact more costly than sheet aluminium.<sup>36</sup>

An explanation for the adoption of a more expensive material for this essential piece of equipment is provided within the minutes from a meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission held in April 1920. During the meeting, Chairman Ware proposed that the new material was adopted as a result of concerns raised by army doctors.<sup>37</sup> Ware went on to explain that 'The metal ones were abandoned by the British Army some time in 1915. At the time I drew attention to the fact that these others would not last, but for military reasons and other reasons, it was considered wiser to use the fibre; it inflicts less of a wound. The doctors were altogether against the use of a metal disc, and these fibre discs were introduced'.<sup>38</sup> When questioned by Sir Thomas Mackenzie on whether the wounds were caused when the bullet struck the metal of the disc, Ware responded 'Yes, and the doctors were all against it. I had this fight out at the time. The doctors were very strongly against the use of the metal ones for that reason... They were often struck'.<sup>39</sup> Though it might seem incomprehensible that such a thin metal disc should contribute to a soldier's wounds, examples of this do exist. When Lieutenant Mason of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment was killed during the Battle of the Aisne on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1914, it was found that the force of the piece of shrapnel which wounded him had driven a portion of his identity

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<sup>35</sup>David O'Mara, *Identifying the Dead: A Short Study of the Identification Tags of 1914-18*, The Western Front Association, (2009). <http://wfa-archive.chrislord.me/the-great-war/great-war-on-land/weapons-equipment-uniform/1033-identifying-dead-short-study-identification-tags-1914-1918#sthash.GvA0FiEC.dpbs>. Accessed 1 August 2019, O'Mara, personal communication (2018).

<sup>36</sup>David O'Mara, *Identifying the Dead*, unpublished.

<sup>37</sup>CWGC/2/2/1/22 Minutes of the Proceedings of the Meeting of the Imperial War Graves Commission held at The Office of Works, St. James's Park on Tuesday, 20 April 1920, p. 40.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

disc into his lung'.<sup>40</sup> Mason's college magazine, the *Malvernian* also reported his death, describing that 'the force... had driven the metallic identity disc into his lungs'.<sup>41</sup> The fibre identity discs were put into production and were distributed to new recruits once existing supplies of the aluminium identity had been depleted. Small quantities of aluminium identity discs continued to be issued to newly enlisted soldiers until supplies ran out midway through 1915.<sup>42</sup>

Whilst the introduction of the 1914 fibre identity disc may have alleviated the concerns of the army medics over the worsening of wounds, the system was not without flaw. Once the identity disc was removed from the corpse along with any personal possessions, a corpse could be rendered unidentifiable.<sup>43</sup> From 1914 onwards, privately purchased forms of identification such as discs, bracelets, buttons and medals can be found amongst the possessions of soldiers of almost every combatant nation for the duration of the war, with bracelets amongst the most commonly encountered examples.<sup>44</sup> The use of privately purchased or handmade identity tags and bracelets amongst British soldiers suggests that there were significant concerns about the potential of becoming one of the unknown.

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<sup>40</sup>The UK National Archive (TNA) RG 35/36, General Register Office: Miscellaneous Foreign Death Returns, 'Lieutenant Rowland Charles Mason', *Roll of Honour Vol. 1*, p. 258.

<sup>41</sup>*Malvernian*, (1914), November, cited in 'Malvern College First World War Casualties'. <http://www.stanwardine.com/cgi-bin/malvernww1.pl?id=275>. Accessed 1 August 2019.

<sup>42</sup>CWGC/2/2/1/22, Minutes ... of the Meeting, 20 April 1920, where Fabian Ware states that the metal discs were totally 'abandoned by the British Army some time in 1915'.

<sup>43</sup>Soldiers were expected to mark or stamp some items of their kit, and these items were sometimes used to confirm the identification of the fallen soldier. In cases where the identity discs and personal effects had already been removed by another soldier, or voluntary organisation at an earlier date, the body would be left without identification. From an archaeological perspective, it is important to note that cultures of swapping, collecting and looting mean that personal items and buttons cannot always be considered as conclusive confirmation of identity and further investigation may be required.

<sup>44</sup>Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 215; Richard Van Emden, *The Quick and the Dead* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), p. 136.

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Figure 4: “Identity disc worn by Lance-Corporal Albert Haughton, 23rd Battalion, The Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment), 1916” – NAM. 2005-09-35-1

Figure 5: Identity discs of Michael Connor. Note the handwritten 1914 pattern disc paired with a 1907 aluminium disc – From the collection of David O'Mara

In addition to privately purchased identification, some soldiers would adapt their existing discs, adding additional information to the reverse of their disc, or on a spare 'emergency' pattern disc. This creative marking was soon noticed and prohibited following the release of Army Order 206 issued on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 1915:

It has been brought to notice that in many instances the particulars of the identity discs are not stamped as directed in the regulations, but marked with ink or indelible pencil. This marking soon becomes illegible and the discs useless.<sup>45</sup>

The reader is instructed that 'care must be taken to see that all identity discs are stamped with the 1/8-inch stamps' as directed.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Army Order 206 20 May 1915.

<sup>46</sup>Army Order 206 20 May 1915.

In some cases, these items, whether purchased or personally adapted, may be nothing more than a souvenir or a product of boredom. However, it seems that both soldiers, and their loved ones at home, understood that there was a possibility of becoming one of the many unknown, and they did not consider their singular identity disc sufficient. The poet Roland Leighton wrote to his mother to ask her to send a silver identification bracelet to him in France. His mother would later recall her reaction to this request:

I knew what it stood for as I looked at it. It stood first and foremost for the fact that the boy who in himself was all earth and all heaven to me was in the army only one among many thousands- perhaps among many hundreds of thousands. It stood for a fearful confusion in which masses of men might get inextricably mixed up so that none could know who this fellow was; and it stood for a field on which there were many dead lying, and for grim figures walking about among those dead and depending for their identifications on some token worn by the still shapes whose lips would speak no more. All this passed through my mind while I packed up the little disc and chain.<sup>47</sup>

This concern was not held without cause. As the death toll continued to rise, so did the number of enquiries from the home front. Ware's mobile ambulance unit had been primarily tasked with searching for the remains of lost British officers and men on behalf of the British Red Cross and naturally, this led to the discovery of many more graves, with many marked only in a most hurried and inefficient manner, and with some completely unidentifiable.<sup>48</sup> It was obvious to Ware's team that if efforts were not taken to immediately preserve the grave markings, with their details held by the Commission, that many of these graves would become lost forever. Ware asked his team to provide full details of graves found, and erected, and care was taken to ensure that crosses were renewed, varnished or repainted wherever possible to prevent the future loss of information.<sup>49</sup> Ware's unit continued to expand their work, ultimately transforming the practise of graves registration.

By 1916 there were six graves registration units in France, five distributed along the front line, and the sixth responsible for the communications areas.<sup>50</sup> Whilst each unit was still responsible for the burial of their own dead, graves registration officers were appointed to identify the deceased, providing a temporary grave marker and a report

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<sup>47</sup>Van Emden, *Quick and the Dead*, p. 37.

<sup>48</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/34/18 Directorate Of Graves Registration And Enquiries: File 18.

<sup>49</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/34/7, Directorate Of Graves Registration And Enquiries: File 7.

<sup>50</sup>Units were also formed in Egypt, Salonika and Mesopotamia. Anon, 'The Registration and Care of Military Graves During the Present War, *Royal United Services Institution Journal*, Vol. 62, Issue 446 (1917), pp. 299.

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confirming the location of the grave. Professional photographers were also employed to photograph each grave, and a photograph would be provided to anyone who enquired after a photo.<sup>51</sup> Despite the rapid expansion of the Commission, it was still proving impossible to keep up with the identification and burial of such colossal numbers of war dead, particularly in cases where a substantial period of time had passed since the time of death. Here, Ware was able to utilise his position as a civilian working within the British Army to influence the development of a new identity disc which he hoped would meet the needs of his workers and therefore the nation.

On 16<sup>th</sup> May 1915 Temporary Major Arthur Albert Messer of the Graves Registration Commission wrote to General Macready to discuss 'the many instances' where it was not possible to identify bodies at the time of burial due to the absence of identity discs.<sup>52</sup> This meant that identity could only be established with the 'greatest difficulty' and so Messer asked for Macready's consideration on the following points:

- 1) Identity discs are frequently removed at the time of death as evidence of death, and, when casualties are heavy, many bodies are not buried for some days; or it may even be weeks, as in the case of the Battle of Loos, when burying in some parts of the field of battle was stopped by the Corps General for military reasons.
- 2) When burying parties are eventually able to carry out their work, it is found that numbers of bodies bear no mark of identification, so that the identity of many is never established.
- 3) The provision of two discs (a system which has been introduced by the French during the present war), one of which is left on the body until the moment of actual burial, would seem to be the only practical means why which in these cases identity at the time of burial could be ensured and the grave marked in the usual way.<sup>53</sup>

Messer had raised the idea of using a second identity disc at a previous point, which he noted was 'considered inadvisable as there were serious reasons for doubting if British soldiers would adapt themselves to the system'.<sup>54</sup> However, the French Army

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<sup>51</sup>Jeremy Gordon-Smith, *Photographing the Fallen: A War Graves Photographer on the Western Front*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military 2017).

<sup>52</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/34/18, Letter from Major A.A. Messer to the Adjutant General, 16 May 1916.

<sup>53</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/34/18, Letter from Major A.A. Messer to the Adjutant General, 16 May 1916.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

had since introduced their own system of double discs which had 'been found to work satisfactorily', and so it was now deemed appropriate to reconsider the issue for British soldiers. Messer closed the letter with a condemning sentence: 'unfortunately the number of graves which are unknown owing to this cause is very considerable'.<sup>55</sup>

Ware wrote to the Adjutant-General on the 21 June to discuss this issue further. Ware reported that in a large number of cases it had proven 'impossible at the time of burial to identify men who have been killed owing to the fact that the identity discs have been removed. A largely increasing number of graves therefore are, and will remain, unidentified'.<sup>56</sup> The removal of the discs as evidence of death was essential, yet this action had created a new dilemma for the Graves Registration Commission. Ware referred to the introduction of two identity discs by the French Ministry of War in May 1915, which ensured that a disc was left on the body for secondary identification. In the French system, the two discs were worn separately upon the body, which Ware proposed would 'not be suitable for the British Army' for the French had 'been able to rapidly supply the second disc to all men already in the field', whilst it would take 'a very considerable time' to meet the needs of the British Army.<sup>57</sup> The separate disc system also raised questions of how one would be able to confirm whether or not a man found with an identity disc had been wearing another which had been previously removed, which would result in confusion and 'make matters worse than present'.<sup>58</sup>

Ware included a sketch of 'two identity discs which would overcome this difficulty, and which seems in some ways to offer advantages over the French System'.<sup>59</sup> A new disc would be suspended from the original disc by a piece of cord. The lower of the two discs would be removed to provide evidence of death, leaving the upper disc upon the body to be removed at the time of burial. It should be stated that 'in the majority of cases these discs would be removed at night', often under rifle or machine gun fire, and so the new disc was produced from green fibre to make it easily distinguishable from the original disc during daylight, and 'lozenge shape' so that it could be easily felt in the dark.<sup>60</sup> Ware also stipulated that once the lower disc had been removed, the piece of severed cord should stay attached to the upper disc, which could be easily

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/34/18, Letter from Fabian Ware to the Adjutant General, 21 June 1916.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/34/18, Scheme for the Duplicate Identity Disc.

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felt by any searcher, providing evidence that there were originally two discs upon the body.<sup>61</sup>

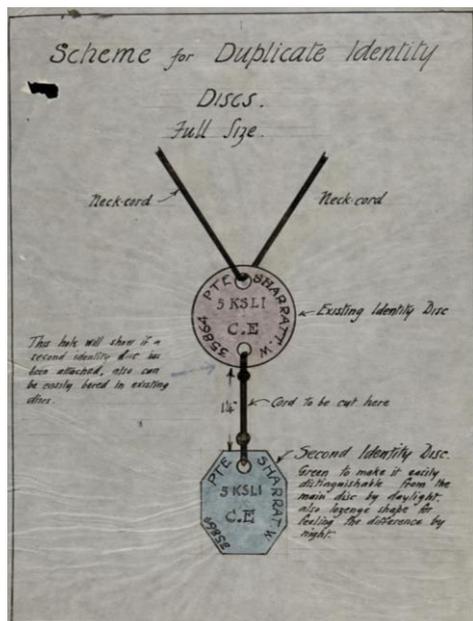


Figure 6: “Duplicate Identity Discs” Sketch from June 1916 – CWGC/1/1/1/34/18

The scheme was approved and on 24 June, instructions were issued to order 4 million discs as per Ware's drawing, with the cords fitted by the contractor. Contractors supplying outstanding orders for the red discs should now stamp an additional hole at the base of the disc, and red discs stored in R.A.C.D and at Clothing Depots should be perforated in the same way.<sup>62</sup>

In a letter dated 29 June 1916, B. B. Cubitt sent a letter on behalf of the Army Council to an unknown recipient stating that the Army Council were 'prepared to accept Ware's suggestion and had 'issued instructions for the provision of a sufficient number of the duplicate identity discs to carry it forward'.<sup>63</sup> Cubitt's letter goes on to warn that there would be some time before a sufficient quantity of discs would become

<sup>61</sup> CWGC/1/1/1/34/18, Letter from Fabian Ware to the Adjutant General, 21 June 1916.

<sup>62</sup> CWGC/1/1/1/34/18, Note from D.G.O.S to C.O.O, R.A.C.D., 24 June 1916.

<sup>63</sup> CWGC/1/1/1/34/18, Letter from B.B. Cubitt to Q.M.G.7, 27 June 1916.

available for general issue, asking the recipient for their 'opinion as to the best and most speedy arrangement for the preparation and supply of the second disc to the troops already in the field'.<sup>64</sup> Lastly, Cubitt acknowledged the need for additional supplies for stamping and punching holes in the new discs.<sup>65</sup> On 12 July Ware sent a telegram to Captain Taylor requesting 'if not inconvenient' a delay in the manufacture of the duplicate disc 'pending further opinions from Armies'.<sup>66</sup> Following the circulation of the new double disc scheme, 'the Ordnance people' had reminded Ware that when previously consulted, three of the Armies had suggested that an additional disc should be worn at the wrist.<sup>67</sup> Ware claimed that he had not been informed at the time, but merely informed by the Adjutant-General's office that the Armies had approved the general idea. Consequently, the Adjutant-General had requested that the Armies were consulted again to see if they would consider the new system which they had not yet seen, rather than a bracelet.

The War Office notified Commanding Officers of the pending duplicate scheme on 24 August 1916 with the release of Army Order 287, including new illustrations which depicted the new green disc worn round the neck, with the original red disc suspended from it, as opposed to the original design. The new discs were to be renamed "Disc, identity, No.1, green" and "Disc, identity, No.2, red".<sup>68</sup> Disc No.1 would replace disc No. 2 on the 42-inch length of cord worn around the neck. Disc No.2 was to be fastened to Disc No.1 with the new, shorter length of cord. Crucially, these orders gave no information about which disc to remove from the body of a fallen soldier, or why the double disc was being implemented. This information was circulated on the home front by newspapers such as the *Daily Mail*, who interestingly gave clear instructions for their use in a feature entitled 'Tommy's Necklet' published on 25 August 1916.<sup>69</sup>

A special Army order on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1916 which provided further details on how to use the disc:

With reference to Army Order 287 of 1916, in case of the death of an officer or soldier in the field, the lower disc, known as "Disc, identity, No.2, red," will be removed and disposed of in the same manner as heretofore.

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/34/18, Letter from Lt. Col. Fabian Ware to Captain Taylor, 12 July 1916.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/34/18 Army Orders, War Office, 24 August 1916.

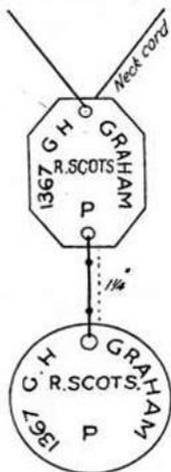
<sup>69</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/34/18, Anon (August 25 1916), Tommy's Necklet. *The Daily Mail*.

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The upper disc, known as "Disc, identity, No. 1, green," will not be removed but will be buried with the body.

Consequently, in cases where a body can be reached and identified, but cannot be brought back for burial, the lower disc will be removed, to ensure proper notification of death, while the upper disc will remain as a safeguard against the loss of identity when it becomes impossible to bury. The two discs will be worn round the neck, as directed in Army Order 287 of 1916, by all officers and soldiers on active service, and neglect to wear the discs will be regarded as a breach of discipline.<sup>70</sup>

**V.—Identity Discs.**—In future each officer and A.O. 287.  
— soldier will be supplied with two identity discs which 1916.  
— will be worn as shown in the diagram below :—



The upper disc will be known as "Disc, identity, No. 1, green"; the lower one as "Disc, identity, No. 2, red."

**A.O. 287** "Disc, identity, No. 1, green," will be issued with  
**1916** six inches of cord attached. In the case of troops now  
*continued.* serving it will, after it is marked, be substituted for  
the red disc now in possession. The red disc will then  
be fastened to the green one by the string attached to  
the latter.

Figure 7: "Identity Discs", Army Order 287 1916 – provided by David O'Mara

Despite the release of these orders, there were still substantial delays in the release of the new identity discs. Ware petitioned the office of the Adjutant General on the 6 November 1916 to confirm whether they were going to take any steps to expedite

<sup>70</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/34/18, Army Orders, War Office, 24 August 1916.

the issue of the discs. The GRC was 'receiving many inquiries as to why identification of bodies is in so many cases impossible; if we are able to reply that this new scheme of double identity disc (sic) has been completely carried out we can at least say that every possible precaution against loss of identity has been taken'.<sup>71</sup> On 15 November it was reported that 200,000 discs had arrived in France, and were being distributed at a rate of 50,000 a week.<sup>72</sup> Supplies had been distributed to other countries, but now France were to receive the 'whole supply' to ensure distribution in larger numbers was possible.<sup>73</sup> By 1 December 1,067,000 discs had been issued to France, with 690,000 outstanding though these orders were expected to have been fulfilled within a period of four weeks.<sup>74</sup> Occasionally, a combination of the new green disc and the 1907 aluminium design can be found (as opposed to the combination of a green and a red fibre disc) in archives or amongst private collections. It is possible that additional red fibre discs were not distributed to those still in possession of the aluminium discs, resulting in occasional unauthorised pairings of discs.

In May 1917 the Directorate of Graves Registration was rebranded as the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC). Graves Registration Units were formed to retrieve bodies and bury them before marking and recording the grave.<sup>75</sup> Information from the identity disc would be recorded on the grave marker, including the name, rank and number of the soldier, and the date of death would be added wherever possible.<sup>76</sup> Around this time, concerns were raised about the number of unburied dead. On 29 June 1917, Ware reported that 'we are on the verge of serious trouble about the number of bodies lying out still unburied on the Somme battlefields. The soldiers returning wounded or in leave to England are complaining bitterly about it and the War Office has already received letters on the matter'.<sup>77</sup> Adjutant-General G. H. Fowke campaigned for 'the necessity of the provision of some special organisation to

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<sup>71</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/34/18, Message from Fabian Ware to the Adjutant General, 6 November 1916.

<sup>72</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/34/18, Letter from the Adjutant General to the Director of Graves Registration and Enquiries, 15 November 1916.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>CWGC/1/1/1/34/18, Note from Q.M.G to A.G., 1 December 1916.

<sup>75</sup>Ross Wilson, 'The Burial of the Dead: The British Army on the Western Front, 1914-18, *War & Society*, Vol. 31, Issue 1 (2012), p. 28.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>77</sup>CWGC/1/2/1/12, A Manual Of Instructions For Officers Employed In A Graves Registration Unit; letter from Fabian Ware to the Directorate of Graves Registration & Enquiries.

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undertake burials', or alternatively 'to make divisions responsible for the burial of their own dead'.<sup>78</sup>

Arrangements were made for the provision of burial parties made up of soldiers and labourers from each unit to relieve fighting troops of the task of the clearing of the dead during heavy conflict. Where possible, the dead were moved behind the front line for identification and subsequent burial. These processes, combined with the presence of the duplicate identity disc, significantly increased the percentage of recorded burials.<sup>79</sup> If it was not possible to move the dead from the battlefield, they were buried in speedily dug graves and wherever possible the existing landscape was utilised. For example, soldiers were reported as buried within old trenches, or in shell holes.<sup>80</sup>

Despite the organisation of burial parties, the identification and burial of the dead was not without its risks. Burials were frequently carried out in the dark and at risk of enemy fire. Searches for personal possessions could be limited to a quick fumble in the dark before a shallow burial to complete the job as quickly as possible. Many bodies had been exposed for days, if not weeks, and could result in a gruesome experience for the burial officer in attendance. Private J. McCauley was attached to a special burial detail between August and November 1918 when recovering from an injury. He described one particularly graphic incident:

Often have I picked up the remains of a fine brave man on a shovel. Just a little heap of bones and maggots to be carried to the common burial place. Numerous bodies were found lying submerged in the water, in shell holes and mine craters; bodies that seemed quite whole, but which became like huge masses of white, slimy chalk when we handled them. I shuddered as my hands, covered in soft flesh and slime, moved about in search of the disc, and I have had to pull bodies to pieces in order that they should not be buried unknown. It was very painful to have to bury the unknown.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Peter Hodgkinson, 'Clearing the Dead', *Journal of First World War Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1. (2007), online at: <http://www.vlib.us/wwi/resources/clearingthedead.html>. Accessed 1 August 2019.

<sup>79</sup>Anon, 'The Registration and Care of Military Graves During the Present War', *Royal United Services Institution Journal*, Vol. 62, Issue 446 (1917), p. 300.

<sup>80</sup>Wilson, 'The Burial of the Dead', p. 36.

<sup>81</sup>Imperial War Museum (IWM) DOCS 97/10/1; J. McCauley, cited in Hodgkinson, 'Clearing the Dead', <http://www.vlib.us/wwi/resources/clearingthedead.html>. Accessed 1 August 2019.

## **Conclusion**

Identity discs used in the First World War act as a physical connection between us today and those that served during the war, providing us with information about the owner of the tag including, on occasion, information about his place of burial. In spite of the expansion of research into the way in which the war is commemorated, and with much focus on the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission; the role of the identity disc in establishing the identity of a soldier for a named burial has been neglected.

By exploring the introduction of the double disc, we can see the unique way in which Fabian Ware communicated with senior military figures on behalf of the nation. The development of Ware's unit and the expansion of graves registration practice between 1914-16 helps us to understand how the British Army responded to the need for burial of the dead as a military necessity, and how it also responded to civilian needs.

The identity disc itself was developed alongside the new tradition of graves registration. Sir Fabian Ware created the spectacular landscapes of the dead that can be witnessed across the Western Front and elsewhere today in the form of CWGC cemeteries. However, the use of single and double fibre discs resulted in the unnecessary creation of many unknown soldiers when post-war recoveries refer to as few as 45% of bodies as having discs.<sup>82</sup>

As early as 1920, it was clear that the fibre material used in discs produced after September 1914 was not fit for purpose. The organic fibre decomposed rapidly, particularly when left upon the body of the fallen. Ware and his Commission had communicated with key figures in the British Army during the war to develop the discs and a graves registration system but there appears to be a distinct absence of any conversations about the poor longevity of the discs, and how this could have been remedied.

The fibre 1916 double disc design is particularly significant as it was used by the British Army until after the Second World War, before being abandoned in 1960, Fibre discs continued to be to the Royal Air Force as late as 1999. Those actions demonstrate that the lessons learned about the identification of soldiers during the First World War were not properly acted upon until much later.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>It should be noted that some metal tags were introduced in the Far East during the Second World War as the fibre quickly disintegrated in hot climates.

# Halfway Home – The Rehabilitation of New Zealand Second World War POWs in Britain

MATTHEW JOHNSON\*

*Independent Scholar, NZ*

Email: [mabj105@gmail.com](mailto:mabj105@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

*While suffering through monotony and deprivations, New Zealand Second World War POWs mentally escaped their confines by imagining their eventual return home. They envisaged returning to a world free from the woes of captivity and war. This paper examines their rehabilitation in Britain. While Britain was not New Zealand, the prisoners expected it to conform to their idealised version of home. However, this paper argues prisoners experienced difficulties during their rehabilitation, and they were destabilised when confronted with the continued presence of the war and captivity.*

I suppose we will spend some weeks in England and then the boat for New Zealand. Have a pretty good time ahead I think, but then I've waited four years for it and that's a mighty long time.<sup>1</sup>

During their monotonous captivity prisoners maintained hope for the future by envisaging what awaited them after their liberation. They dreamed of a life without restrictions, ample food and a return home. This paper examines the experiences of New Zealand Second World War prisoners of war (POWs) as they rehabilitated in Britain in 1945. Prior histories have neglected this period, but this study shows the men's return to a familiar environment was an important, albeit challenging, step in their recuperation. In the opening quotation, Private Stuart Wilson wrote to his family back in New Zealand letting them know he had been liberated from his captivity and noting his eagerness to have an enjoyable rehabilitation experience. While optimistic,

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\*Matthew Johnson is an independent scholar with a PhD from the University of Waikato, New Zealand. His primary research interest is the POW experience of New Zealanders in Europe and North Africa during the Second World War.

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<sup>1</sup>Auckland War Memorial Museum Library (AWMML), MS-99-93, letter collection, Stuart Wilson, undated letter.

a sense of doubt lingered in his message. After years of living a restricted existence, it was almost as if he would not allow himself to believe his ordeal was nearing its end.

For the most part the prisoners featured in this study were captured early in the war and spent several years in POW camps in Italy and Germany. This paper uses a variety of sources, including diaries, letters and memoirs, to reveal the men's imagined version of home which helped them to endure their captivity and the reality they encountered when they were rehabilitating in Britain. Each of these sources has limitations, but each reinforces the men's desire to document their experience. While diaries and letters are often thought to be more "truthful" accounts because they were written closer in time to the event, the availability of these sources is limited because many were either destroyed or lost in captivity. Sergeant Pilot Jack Hardie recalled in his memoir that during their final days of captivity, 'Most of the prisoners found they were overloaded and had thrown away anything they thought was not essential. Books were the first to go and there were many handwritten journals of the owners' and others' experiences thrown away.'<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it was not uncommon for diaries which survived to have few details of the POWs' rehabilitation. This part of the men's experience features more prominently in their memoirs.

It was not until post-captivity that prisoners had time to contemplate their transitions from soldiers to captives to free men and turn their experiences into coherent accounts. These reflections were affected by memory and selectivity, but this does not disqualify their reliability as historical sources. Former soldier and literary scholar Samuel Hynes argues that the limitations of memoirs 'can be resolved if we think of the truth of war experience as being the sum of witnesses, the collective tale that soldiers tell.'<sup>3</sup> Although this narrative remains incomplete, it is the closest history can come to describing 'the reality of what men did, and what was done to them, in this war or that one.'<sup>4</sup> This paper briefly outlines the official procedures that were put in place to accommodate New Zealand POWs, but it agrees with Hynes' perspective by emphasising the men's individual experiences. The prisoners described a personal journey to rejoin the world beyond the wire, with many of these stories sharing common elements of anticipation, relief, and a sense of disillusionment when their experience differed from what they had imagined. In a similar way to how POWs were destabilised by their initial transition into captivity, this article highlights the difficulties they encountered as they adjusted to life outside the wire. Some of these complications were related to the men's continual fear that the public may have viewed

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<sup>2</sup>Jack Hardie, *From Timaru to Stalag VIII B: A Kiwi Airman's Wartime Story* (Wellington: Steele Roberts Ltd, 2009), p. 118.

<sup>3</sup>Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (London: Pimlico, 1998), p. 25.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 25.

their imprisonment as shameful and this feeling of inadequacy reappeared when men were rejected for employment assistance or when their post-captivity experiences differed from their expectations.

### **The POW Experience of New Zealanders and Dreaming of Home**

During the Second World War more than 9000 New Zealanders were POWs. The majority of these men were captured as they tried to halt the Axis advances during the defence of Greece, Crete and North Africa in 1941-42.<sup>5</sup> The men's capture triggered a destabilising transition from soldier to captive. Historian David Rolf and sociologist Walter Lunden argue that few soldiers thought about the possibility of being captured.<sup>6</sup> Padre John Ledgerwood summarised the feelings of many New Zealand POWs when he recalled his capture, noting that 'the suddenness of the physical change from active soldiering to prisoner of war life, left the mind in a torpor as to render one temporarily incapable of reminiscences [sic].'<sup>7</sup> Sergeant Bruce Crowley was more disparaging in his recollections of his capture. Crowley remembered that his surrender at Greece was, 'A disgrace. We were prepared to fight and die – not to be captured.'<sup>8</sup> The men's imprisonment had challenged their identities as soldiers. The transition from soldiers to captives was a seminal moment in their POW experience, where they left behind the familiarity of their expected wartime roles and entered a world of uncertainty. The strangeness the men encountered during this initial phase was amplified by the poor treatment from their guards, particularly the Italians. Corporal John Broad recalled that if he detailed the conditions of the transit camp at Benghazi, Libya, 'the world will be shocked and horrified at the treatment meted out by the Italians.'<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Crowley remembered that, in his experience, the Italians were disrespectful toward the prisoners, and they often tried to dehumanise them. Crowley noted that when he was marched to his transit camp at Corinth, 'these bastards were lining up and spitting on us.'<sup>10</sup> Although

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<sup>5</sup>In Greece 1856 New Zealanders were taken prisoner, similar to the 2180 men taken on Crete. The campaigns in North Africa resulted in 3861 POWs. W. Wynne Mason, *Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939-1945: Prisoners of War* (Wellington: War History Branch, Dept. of Internal Affairs, 1954), pp. v-viii.

<sup>6</sup>David Rolf, *Prisoners of the Reich: Germany's Captives 1939-1945* (London: Leo Cooper Ltd, 1988), p. 5; Walter A. Lunden, 'Captivity Psychoses among Prisoners of War', *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 39, 6 (1949), p. 725.

<sup>7</sup>Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand (ATL), MS-Papers-5644-3, John Ledgerwood, *Stalag XVIII A Wolfsburg*, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Julia Millen, *North to Apricots: The escape stories of Sergeant Bruce Crowley DCM, New Zealand Prisoner of War, Greece & Germany 1941-1943* (Wellington: Bocoman Ltd, 2012), p. xiii.

<sup>9</sup>John Evelyn Broad, *Poor People Poor Us* (Wellington: H. Tombs, 1945), p. 34.

<sup>10</sup>Millen, *North to Apricots*, p. xiv.

some New Zealand POWs also felt hatred toward their German guards, others expressed a begrudging respect, with Captain John Borrie recalling even though the Germans spoke in a '...strange guttural language. They seemed human, intelligent fellows, who could even smile.'<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the prevailing feeling in most men's accounts was that their treatment was adequate, with most complaints centred on the lack of food or the guards' incompetence. Outside of the occasional rough treatment, few men described acts of brutality.

When they were transferred to more permanent facilities in Italy and Germany the men attempted to familiarise the camps into more homely environments. These efforts often led to the introduction of leisure activities such as sport, theatre and educational projects, which could briefly lessen feelings of isolation and monotony.<sup>12</sup> However, not all prisoners could freely participate in these activities because non-officers were mandated by the Geneva Convention to be available for work placements.<sup>13</sup> There were restrictions on the type of work prisoners could be assigned, but Simon MacKenzie notes that by 1941 these rules were often broken as POWs were employed in war related activities.<sup>14</sup> In a similar way to how the men were destabilised by their failure to live up to their expected wartime roles, being forced to work for the enemy added an additional layer of strangeness to the POW experience. Even though they had little choice in complying with these regulations, POWs were aware that their efforts represented a moral dilemma. When Private Bill Soundy was assigned to a work placement at Stalag VIII B, Silesia, he reaffirmed a common belief that, 'most of us took the view that however innocent the occupation, we were releasing one civilian to work for their war effort, and that was not what we had joined the services for.'<sup>15</sup>

Even though individuals had differing experiences throughout their prolonged captivity, some POWs engaged in escapism by constructing an idealised version of home. In her study of British POWs, Clare Makepeace argues that these 'fantasies allowed men to

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<sup>11</sup>John Borrie, *Despite Captivity: A Doctor's Life as Prisoner of War* (New Zealand: Whitcoulls Limited, 1975), p. 12.

<sup>12</sup>Pamela Cohen, 'Behind Barbed Wire: Sport and Australian Prisoners of War', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 23, 1 (November, 2006), pp. 63-86; David Rolf, 'The education of British prisoners of war in German captivity, 1939-1945', *History of Education*, 18, 3 (1989), pp. 257-265.

<sup>13</sup>Peter Monteath, 'Australian POW labour in Germany in World War II', *Labour History*, 103 (2012), pp. 83-102.

<sup>14</sup>S.P. MacKenzie, 'The Treatment of Prisoners of War in World War II', *The Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), p. 499.

<sup>15</sup>Bill Soundy, *Sounding Off* (Whangarei: Aqualine Promotions Ltd, 1997), p. 41.

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return home to their loved ones of civvy street.<sup>16</sup> This idyllic world not only represented hope for the future, but also a mental space where the men retreated from their oppressive surroundings. In this sense, home was more than a destination, it was a concept that was constantly being shaped by the men's experiences. Private Jack Gallichan confided in his diary how the notion of home helped him endure his captivity:

I dreamed of home last night. I do so quite a lot. I think of all those great things which await my return when this long, long trail has ceased winding. The hard job is to keep one's feet on that trail. I'll do so if it kills me.<sup>17</sup>

Gallichan was captured in North Africa in 1942, but by the time he wrote this diary entry in 1944 he was working as a coal miner and blacksmith in Poland. The grimness and monotony of this assignment could be overwhelming, with Gallichan vividly describing that, 'On and on we went, and I felt like a lost soul, dumbly, and faithfully, following a gloating guide into the depths of hell.'<sup>18</sup> However, the prospect of returning to a familiar place was the light at the end of the tunnel. When he received news of the Normandy landings, he noted that, 'There is gladness now in the camp, and relief. We go to work with hearts that are much lighter. Our day is coming.'<sup>19</sup> Home was a place where the deprivations of captivity would be forgotten. The strangeness he had endured would be replaced by array of enjoyable experiences.

Although recalling memories from home provided comfort for some POWs, others found imagining life back in New Zealand upsetting. Sergeant Pilot Jack Rae recalled in his memoir how he had difficulty forgetting he was a prisoner, noting that:

Dreaming of my beautiful Piha surf beach back in NZ was easy but drifting immediately off to sleep just didn't work for me. I remained acutely aware that I was lying on a very hard uncomfortable bunk, in a depressing wooden hut surrounded outside by menacing barbed wire.<sup>20</sup>

Rae's memories of home reinforced what he was missing in captivity. The contrast between the peaceful beach and the menacing wire emphasised that his camp lacked

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<sup>16</sup>Clare Makepeace, *Captives of War: British Prisoners of War in Europe in the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 136.

<sup>17</sup>ATL, MS-Papers-8910-01, Jack Gallichan, *Barbed Wire Days*, p. 354.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 311.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 356.

<sup>20</sup>Jack Rae, *Kiwi Spitfire Ace: A Gripping World War II Story of Action, Captivity and Freedom* (London: Grub Street, 2001), p. 130.

the security of home. He idealised a return to a world of comfort; one where the hardness and bleakness of captivity were replaced by softness and beauty.

Reminders of home were not limited to mental fantasies, Captain Bruce Robertson remembered how small events in camp life provoked memories of home:

We have a regular issue of beer each day, if you could call it beer. Practically non-intoxicant, but it has however a faint suggestion of that glorious golden beverage I faintly remember consuming in the dim past. Maybe in the distant future I may again make its glorious acquaintance.<sup>21</sup>

While not available to all POWs, some were able to drink beer and enjoy a previously satisfying experience. Although the camp brew was inferior to those Robertson remembered back home, he was struck by the nostalgia this beverage generated. Drinking beer was a 'faint' reminder that helped him overcome his distance from home and awaken memories of the past. It was a small act of civility that encouraged him to anticipate his return to New Zealand. Similarly, Private Sydney Burns wrote to his family, wishing them a happy holiday. He stated, 'I hope you all have a happy one. Have a couple of quick ones on me just for old times, I'll have mine soon, I hope.'<sup>22</sup>

The return to the familiar was a constant theme throughout the men's POW experience. This was magnified by the strangeness prisoners encountered during their last months of captivity in 1944-45. Most POWs were forced to walk westward from their prison camps to avoid being overrun by Soviet forces.<sup>23</sup> These marches were physically and mentally gruelling, but they represented the start of a journey that culminated in their eventual freedom. Gallichan noted his mentality on the march, 'We just have to keep our spirits up and realise that each step along these frozen highways is a step nearer home, and peace, and comfort, and the smell of good cooking.'<sup>24</sup> Gallichan's statement was brief, but it signified the desire to return to the warmth of civility. His simple idealised vision of home helped carry him through his darkest days of captivity. Like other POWs, Gallichan did not know what awaited him post-captivity, but he hoped he was returning to the world as he had remembered it.

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<sup>21</sup>Bruce Robertson, *For the Duration: 2NZEF Officer Bruce Robertson on Active Duty and 'In the Bag'*, ed. by Rosanne Robertson (Wellington: Ngaio Press, 2010), p. 167.

<sup>22</sup>ATL, MS-Papers-7156-1, letter collection, Sydney Burns, 6 December 1942.

<sup>23</sup>John Nichol and Tony Rennell, *The Last Escape: The Untold Story of Allied Prisoners of War in Germany 1944-45* (London: Viking, 2002).

<sup>24</sup>AWMML, MS 1145, Jack Gallichan, *From the Tunnel to the Light: Diary of a New Zealand Prisoner-of-War*, p. 17.

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While New Zealand was the men's desired destination, their longing for home, as described by Gallichan, included aspects of civility which were not limited to one place. Philosopher Alfred Schuetz argues for a broader definition of home, because a sense of belonging could be found beyond a fixed area. It was a feeling which could be felt through familiar elements such as language and food.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, philosopher Aviezer Tucker contended that 'Home is where we could or can be ourselves, feel at ease, secure, able to express ourselves freely and fully, whether we have actually been there or not.'<sup>26</sup> These arguments suggest that rather than purely a physical place, the feeling of being at home, or belonging, could be conjured through the presence of comforting elements. This belief was consistent with POWs' imagined version of home, the familiarity of their pre-war lives replaced the strangeness of captivity. In a poem written in captivity, Sergeant E.H. Everton noted that when dreaming of home, 'You think of love and laughter in an atmosphere more pleasant. You tread again the ways of life you know but took for granted.'<sup>27</sup> Everton described home in modest terms. He did not harbour grand ambitions, he simply wanted to return to a place where he was loved. After the restrictions and unpredictability of captivity, he envisaged his liberation would offer freedom and stability.

### **Arriving in Britain and Rehabilitation Efforts**

In July 1942 the War Office set up a committee to plan for the rehabilitation of Commonwealth POWs.<sup>28</sup> The processes for their treatment were drawn from the experiences of those who had worked with previous repatriation drafts of sick and wounded prisoners, as well as information gathered from POWs who had successfully escaped.<sup>29</sup> Although there were initial discussions that New Zealand POWs should be repatriated through Italy and Egypt, it was later deemed more practical to evacuate them to Britain.<sup>30</sup> Many New Zealand POWs found this decision to be ideal, because they hoped to 'complete studies and examinations in England, to gain special knowledge or experience in some branch of their occupation, to see parents and other near relatives, or to rejoin their wives and children temporarily resident there.'<sup>31</sup>

When the war in Europe ended, the prisoners were transferred to transport hubs, where they were moved to Britain. While the men had anticipated returning to a

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<sup>25</sup> Alfred Schuetz, 'The Homecomer', *American Journal of Sociology*, 50, 5 (March, 1945), p. 370.

<sup>26</sup> Aviezer Tucker, 'In Search of Home', *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 11, 2 (1994), p. 184.

<sup>27</sup> ATL, MS-Papers-10082-06, E.H. Everton, poem collection, 'Dreams'.

<sup>28</sup> Mason, *Official History*, p. 492.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 493-94.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 493.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 493

familiar environment, their initial thoughts were filled with trepidation, partly because some prisoners still struggled with their identity as defeated soldiers. Upon arriving in Britain, some POWs expressed their surprise that people were welcoming to them. The rigidity of captivity and the infrequency of contact with the outside world dulled the men's expectations. Hardie recalled, 'We still felt guilty about being prisoners and were amazed to find all these people were on hand to welcome us back to Blighty.'<sup>32</sup> Staff Sergeant John Hobbs noted that it was the small touches of hospitality that made the biggest impression. He stated that when he arrived at Wing aerodrome, 'As each man stepped off the plane, he was met by a smiling W.A.A.F. girl who took him by the arm, and an R.A.F. boy who carried the baggage and who took the other arm.'<sup>33</sup> To Hobbs' surprise, the men were being welcomed back as heroes. Similarly, Warrant Officer Galbraith Hyde remembered his reception at Wing aerodrome:

The whole thing was emotionally terribly hard to handle. People being nice to you! It broke me up much more than anything I had experienced in the last few years.... After this off to a clean barrack, a bed with sheets! First I'd seen for years. A shower with a shower stall to myself, take my own time and a clean dry towel, heaven is made of such things!<sup>34</sup>

Hyde found it difficult to understand why he was being treated kindly. It was common for prisoners to form strong bonds with one another, but these relationships were often limited to smaller combines which were based on economic and emotional reciprocation. Hyde was confused that those running the rehabilitation centres made him feel comfortable without expecting anything in return. Moreover, after years of living in filth, to be able to shower at one's leisure was overwhelming. Hyde's insistence that his new environment was clean alluded to the chance for a fresh start. This was a place he could cleanse himself of his unpleasant captivity.

Like Hyde, Gallichan was overwhelmed by the reception his group received at Westcott aerodrome. He noted that:

We saw the big sign 'Welcome to Westcott' and we felt the kindness, the friendliness and the willingness to help us of the Waafs who came to take us inside. They made a great fuss of us.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, Gallichan recalled:

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<sup>32</sup>Hardie, *From Timaru to Stalag VIII B*, p. 136.

<sup>33</sup>ATL, MS-Papers-3958-2, John Hobbs, diary, p. 139.

<sup>34</sup>ATL, MS-Papers-5290, Galbraith Hyde, *The Personal Account of One Man's War 1939-1945*, p. 100.

<sup>35</sup>Gallichan, *From the Tunnel to the Light*, p. 136.

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Inside the hanger we put our packs in a safe place and were then deloused in a room partitioned off for that purpose, given a packet of cigarettes each and sat down at tables which offered us tea, fruit-cake, biscuits and white-bread sandwiches, the things we had dreamed of while lying in the damp straw of the barns on our march. 'I've never felt so bloody welcome in all my life', said one fellow. And that was how we all felt.<sup>36</sup>

It was common for POWs to feel pessimistic about how they would be received upon their return home. The men were aware that captivity had a connotation of shame and failure. However, the reception they received put some of those concerns at ease. Even though the New Zealanders were not home, they often remarked how welcome they felt. Gallichan mentioned that inside the hanger they were 'offered' tea and food. This choice was significant. In captivity, the men had limited food options, but at the rehabilitation centres they had the freedom to choose what they consumed.

Food played an important role in the men's expectations for their return home. In captivity they filled their scrapbooks with images of food and conceived their ideal menus, with accompanying recipes. Private Arthur Coe remembered the meal his group was given at his camp at Aylesbury:

The English cooks at Alesbury [sic] prepared a beautiful roast meal and sweets with cream because they heard we were going on leave next day. I'm sure they used their own precious food coupons. I'm equally sure, these generous souls were disappointed to see how little we were able to eat. We heaped them with praise and thanks for their kindness to us and hoped they could understand.<sup>37</sup>

Coe noted two important aspects of his meal at Aylesbury. First, he suggested the cooks had sacrificed their own food coupons to put on the feast. In captivity, food was scarce and the perception that someone was getting more than their fair share sometimes led to disputes. It was strange to have someone give something without any desire for anything in return. Second, after dreaming of what they would eat when the limitations of captivity dissipated, they were disappointed that they were unable to consume everything that was offered to them. Still, the gesture of a well-cooked meal represented a warmth the POWs had not experienced for some time.

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>37</sup>Kippenberger Military Archive, Waiouru, New Zealand (KMA), 2005.291, Arthur Coe, unpublished ms, p. 44.



Figure 1. Locals provide hospitality to New Zealand POWs in Kent.<sup>38</sup>

Preparations for how to accommodate approximately 8000 New Zealand POWs in Britain began in earnest in March 1944.<sup>39</sup> However, procuring sufficient housing proved difficult. In New Zealand's official war history, W. Wynne Mason states that the headquarters for repatriation was meant to be at Dover, but had to be changed at the last moment to accommodate a leave centre for other British troops.<sup>40</sup> Despite these setbacks, the fifty properties requisitioned at Folkestone, Margate and Westgate 'had far greater possibilities for the creation of the type of rest centre visualised for repatriates.'<sup>41</sup> Many of these buildings were seaside hotels prior to the war, which

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<sup>38</sup>Imperial War Museums (IWM), D 24530, photograph, New Zealand Repatriates Arrive in England: Everyday Life for Repatriated POWs in Margate, Kent, England, UK, April 1945.

<sup>39</sup>Mason, *Official History*, p. 495.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 498.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 498.

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suggested these camps prioritised the men's rehabilitation as civilians rather than military reintegration.<sup>42</sup> Hobbs noted in his diary that he was grateful these measures were employed at his camp at Margate:

We were told that we would be disciplined as little as possible, and that we were being regarded as civilians awaiting transport home when we would be discharged from the forces after three months leave. Everything possible was done to make us feel at home, to make us forget what we had been through, to bring us back to full health and strength, and to give us a good time by arranging hospitality in private homes.<sup>43</sup>

Hobbs suggests the staff were careful not to turn the rehabilitation centre into a different sort of prison. The men were treated as civilians, not captives, or even soldiers. This emphasis on forgetting their captivity was significant, because Hobbs' statement was underlined by a sense of brokenness. The need to bring them 'back to full health and strength' implied their experience had not only impacted their physically, but also it had left its mark mentally. Figure 1 shows New Zealand POWs enjoying the hospitality of a local family in Kent. As Hobbs indicates, these encounters provided a chance to fully immerse oneself in the civilian world again.



Figure 2. New Zealand POWs writing letters home at Margate.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 498.

<sup>43</sup>Hobbs, diary, p. 142.

<sup>44</sup>IWM, D 24522, photograph, New Zealand Repatriates Arrive in England: Everyday Life for Repatriated POWs in Margate, Kent, England, UK, April 1945.

An important part of the men's rehabilitation was reconnecting with their loved ones back in New Zealand. During their captivity the men had intermittent correspondence with home. Makepeace argues letter writing was one of 'few ways in which P.O.W.s could achieve a sense of continuity between their past and future existences.'<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Makepeace contends that, 'It is also possible that the efforts made by prisoners to remain part of their civilian worlds were driven by fears of being usurped or forgotten.'<sup>46</sup> The desire for positive affirmation did not disappear once the prisoners were in Britain. If anything, stable communication meant they had more opportunities to reassert their presence in their families' lives. Gunner Bruce Brier wrote to his sister to let her know that he was doing well:

Well Merle, I've done it, I'm back in Blighty after four years and what a joy it is to be among people again who speak your own lingo, and no queue up for spud soup and black bread.<sup>47</sup>

After the strangeness of captivity, Brier was overjoyed to be back in familiar surroundings. He was thankful that his diet no longer consisted of food he associated with his captivity. Brier also felt the need to reassure his sister that he was among people with a shared heritage. The English language was a comforting factor that made him feel welcome and safe. Geographer Marco Antonsich supports the concept that language affected a person's sense of belonging. He argues that 'language can be felt as an element of intimacy, which resonates with one's auto-biographical sphere and, as such, contributes to generate a sense of feeling "at home"'.<sup>48</sup> Even though Brier's message was short, being able to freely contact one's loved ones was marvellous. Similarly, Hobbs noted that when he re-established these familial connections, 'Instead of being on the outer edge of civilisation, it was just like having one foot on the doorstep of home.'<sup>49</sup>

After the men had settled into their lodgings there were activities available to them before they were shipped home. In addition to allocating each man 28 days leave and a daily allowance, the Education and Rehabilitation Service (ERS) was tasked with

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<sup>45</sup>Clare Makepeace, 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire: The Familial Ties of British Prisoners of War held in Europe during the Second World War', *Historical Research*, 86, 231 (2013), p. 160.

<sup>46</sup>Makepeace, 'Living Beyond the Barbed Wire', p. 176.

<sup>47</sup>KMA, 2005.438, Bruce Brier, edited letter collection, p. 31.

<sup>48</sup>Marco Antonsich, 'Searching for Belonging – An Analytical Framework', *Geography Compass*, 4, 6 (2010), p. 648.

<sup>49</sup>Hobbs, diary, p. 142.

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easing the men's transition back into civilian life.<sup>50</sup> The ERS offered educational courses and professional development to those men who wanted to spend their time in Britain productively. It also arranged work placements to local firms.<sup>51</sup> While voluntary, the programmes offered by the ERS gave the men the opportunity to rehabilitate themselves in Britain. Back in New Zealand, the press picked up on this theme and enthusiastically praised the provision of these work placements. One report shared stories of the men's success and willingness to participate in these programmes:

One man, a warrant officer, who had been an Automobile Association employee before his service, was attached to the Automobile Association at Fanim House, in London. This man was being given experience in all branches, including local and foreign travel, insurance and the handling of vehicle transport and road services. Before being attached he was worried about the experience he had missed while being away. Now his confidence has returned and he says he intends to forgo leave on arrival in New Zealand and go to work straight away.<sup>52</sup>

This report's optimistic portrayal of rehabilitation may have been an attempt to shape public opinion by reinforcing the men were not simply holidaying in Britain, they were working hard to ensure they would return home as productive citizens. The article noted how the work placement, and subsequent acquirement of knowledge and skills, had restored the man's confidence. Prisoners had feared that captivity may have impact their abilities, but it was reassuring to the man in the article, and those reading it, that some rehabilitation efforts were successful.

Although the ERS was charged with helping the POWs spend their time productively, Coe remembered the disappointment he felt when his rehabilitation officer refused his application to start a medical career:

My feeling was one of numbness and disbelief. I pictured myself fighting the system over this issue for perhaps months or years and losing the battle in the end. I had gone into the interview with hope of some reasonable assistance and now nearing my 27<sup>th</sup> year, to waste any more time shattered me. I felt trapped.<sup>53</sup>

Coe had worked in camp hospitals and studied medical textbooks in his spare time. However, the rehabilitation officer placed no value on this experience; instead, he saw

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<sup>50</sup>Mason, *Official History*, p. 497.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 497.

<sup>52</sup>*Hutt News*, 26 September 1945, p. 3.

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/HN19450926.2.5>, Accessed November 2019.

<sup>53</sup>Coe, unpublished ms, p. 48.

Coe as a man who had no formal education.<sup>54</sup> The realisation that his time had been wasted was crushing. He had tried to make the best of his imprisonment, but these efforts seemed meaningless post-captivity. His liberation was meant to signal the chance to pursue his dreams, but he quickly found out the post-war world would have restrictions. While he was not bound by chains or wire, Coe still felt confined. Faced with this disappointment, he fled his rehabilitation centre and went AWOL. He remembered taking a train to London:

I sat gazing through the carriage window at the lovely English countryside patterned with hedges, majestic oak and elm trees and a church spire outlined here and there. It all looked so peaceful compared with the chaos, destruction and disappointment in life.<sup>55</sup>

The contrast of the tranquillity of the outside world and his internal despair was striking. Although his vocational prospects were being constrained, his regained mobility restored some of his agency. The countryside was open and full of possibilities. However, there was a lingering prison motif of being trapped behind the carriage window. The peaceful world he had envisaged was so close, but still out of reach.

### **Tourist Experiences**

Coe's rejection of the limitations he faced during his rehabilitation appeared to be common among other prisoners. The *New Zealand Herald* noted POWs seemed determined to venture as far away as possible from their camps. The article stated:

It has been noticed that most of them on leaving camp take out railway vouchers for Inverness, which is one of the furthestmost points to which they can travel, and many do in fact visit Scotland. It has also been observed that they return from leave not only with more self-confidence but also content to settle down to await a ship.<sup>56</sup>

Whether the journey was near or far, POWs rejoiced in being able to move freely. At Brighton, Warrant Officer Charles Croall remembered how intoxicating it was to be able to go where he wanted, when he wanted:

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>56</sup>*New Zealand Herald (NZH)*, 18 July 1945, p. 5.

<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19450718.2.27>, Accessed November 2019.

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Back on English soil for the first time after nearly three years and it now being dark the street lights were shining and it seemed such a marvellous sight to me after all the time I had been subjected to blackout conditions, so I walked the street just revelling in the sight of street lights at night and the freedom I felt just to be able to wander as I liked.<sup>57</sup>

Croall described his journey as almost an out of body experience. Without the restrictions of guard towers and barbed wire, the world was suddenly open. Croall may have been walking aimlessly, but it was significant action that emphasised his freedom. The image of the street lights also contrasted the conditions that the prisoners endured in the prison camps. Against the darkness of captivity and war-ravaged Europe, these lights implied a return to civilisation.

Although most POWs had not been to Britain before, the shared heritage with New Zealand meant that they found the prospect of travelling the country comforting and exciting. In a poem featured in the *Tiki Times*, a prisoner-run newspaper at Milwitz work camp in Poland, one prisoner noted that, 'L stands for London, through which we shall roam, When we've left Milwitz and are on our way home.'<sup>58</sup> Felicity Barnes recognises that New Zealand First World War veterans had a similar affinity to Britain, noting, 'The pyramids might have been fine, but it was London, not Cairo, that Bill Massey's tourists really wanted to see.'<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, Barnes argues, 'When they arrived, soldiers brought their "imagined London" with them, and this may have made them feel more at home there than other places they visited.'<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the prisoners featured in this study framed London as a site of familiarity. It was a place where they hoped they could escape, or perhaps more accurately, return to a sense of normalcy. Hobbs noted:

Very far from feeling a stranger in a strange land, I felt just as much at home in London as I would in Wellington or Dunedin, although I can well imagine the truth in the saying that to a lonely person, London is the loneliest city in the world.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Charles Croall, "You! Croall?" (Tauranga: Brian Riggier Computers, 2010), p. 193.

<sup>58</sup>*The Tiki Times: A Souvenir Booklet of the Camp Newspaper for Prisoners-of-War* (Palmerston North: Keeling & Mundy Ltd, 1950), p. 80.

<sup>59</sup>Felicity Barnes, 'Bill Massey's Tourists in the Big Smoke: Rethinking the First World War's Role in New Zealand's National Identity', *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, 33, 2 (2015), p. 93.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>61</sup>Hobbs, diary, p. 148.

Hobbs presented London as more than a familiar environment; it was home. The lingering strangeness of captivity was replaced by a recognisable travel narrative. In addition to the accustomed tourist sites, even the mundane routines of life, such as traffic, were reminders of a long lost civility. Although far from New Zealand, Hobbs felt like he belonged, which was a powerful emotion after years of feeling isolated. He also mentioned how it was unnecessary to describe what he saw, because it was commonplace.<sup>62</sup> Absent of watchtowers and enclosed compounds, he was simply enjoying a regular experience.

POWs created certain expectations in their anticipation of visiting London, and sometimes it was hard to reconcile that they had finally made it there. Although Hobbs described London as a familiar place, there were moments when he recalled how odd it felt to actually be there:

Being in London was a dream of a lifetime come true, and I found it extremely difficult to believe that this really was London, and not just another product of imagination. This is quite understandable when one considers the years we had spent behind barbed wire, the conditions under which we had lived, particularly in the last few months, and the suddenness of our release and repatriation to England – all within five days.<sup>63</sup>

While the men's anticipation for home had been elongated, their liberation and subsequent release was sudden. Hobbs suggested it was hard to believe they were experiencing moments they had dreamed about for years. In some ways their captivity had conditioned them to expect the worst and this carried over to their initial travel experiences. Hobbs implied that he guarded himself against the possibility that this reality was too good to be true, and that it was a mere fantasy. His inability to fully enjoy himself showed even though he was free, his captivity tainted his experience.

Despite the POWs' eagerness to make the most of their reacquired freedom, it took some men longer to adjust to life outside the wire than they had anticipated. Makepeace notes that British POWs experienced similar feelings of disillusionment because they had 'developed overly romanticised pictures of home which contrasted distinctly from the reality that greeted them.'<sup>64</sup> When faced with the prospect of venturing outside the rehabilitation centres, Lance Corporal Tony Vercoe recalled,

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>64</sup>Makepeace, *Captives of War*, p. 201.

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'This was Britain and here began the world, true freedom, normality. How to deal with it?'<sup>65</sup> Similarly, Soundy noted that:

We were basically let free into that 'Other World' that we had dreamed of for years.

To our amazement, we felt like a cross between Rip van Winkle and a shy country boy suddenly turned loose in the city. We were tongued tied and stammering in the presence of women, and many of us carried something such as a rolled up newspaper to give our hands something to do.<sup>66</sup>

Vercoe and Soundy spent considerable time imagining their life post-captivity, but when faced with the reality of the situation, it was daunting. For Vercoe, the concept of 'normality' was too much to comprehend. He wondered whether he was still equipped to cope with everyday life. Similarly, Soundy noted how normal actions, like speaking to women, had become moments for nervous blunders. It struck him that while he was in captivity, he had been in a state of stasis, but the world had continued on without him. Upon his liberation, he was set loose into a different world than he remembered. Regardless of whether he or the world had changed, he felt out of place.

Like Vercoe and Soundy, Rae remembered feeling uncomfortable during his initial encounters with the world beyond the wire:

Once the euphoria of those first couple of days had passed we dashed off to the centre of London to kick up our heels and enjoy the delights we had been dreaming of for so long. Wine, women and song, we decided, that's what we've been missing all these months and years. The reality, alas, wasn't quite like that.<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, Rae described his first attempt to visit a familiar pub in London:

It was filled with strangers. The world, I discovered, had not stood still while I was away. All my friends of those days were either somewhere in Europe or no longer with us.<sup>68</sup>

Rae noted how his group had envisaged an enjoyable time in London, one which was filled with the things they did not possess in captivity. However, he was disappointed

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<sup>65</sup>Tony Vercoe, *Yesterdays Drums: Echoes from the Wasteland of War* (Wellington: Steele Roberts Ltd, 2001), p. 193.

<sup>66</sup>Soundy, *Sounding Off*, p. 58.

<sup>67</sup>Rae, *Kiwi Spitfire Ace*, p. 168.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 168.

the reality did not live up to his expectations. On the surface, the world he returned to looked familiar, but upon further inspection, it was foreign. Unlike his static existence, life had continued in his absence. It was demoralising to discover there would be no homecoming.

For POWs who found it difficult to understand their new surroundings, simply finding a way to distract themselves was welcomed. And while there were moments of enjoyment, the hope that they could forget their captivity was disrupted by continual reminders of their ordeal. Simple, everyday moments could trigger an intense memory, mentally returning the men back to their prison camps. Captain Osborn Jones noted:

This morning I went for a stroll along the Embankment & other well known parts of London. A fine spring Sunday morning and standing by the Thames looking at the magnificent building of Westminster and listening to Big Ben strike the hour I had difficulty in believing I was awake. These moments of unreality stand over me still & I half expect ... to go out on parade in a square away in Germany.<sup>69</sup>

Jones' statement shows how normal activities had greater significance after captivity. After monotony and restrictions, a peaceful Sunday morning, with a walk along a river and looking at landmarks was hard to fathom. The dreamlike experience culminated in the bell strike, and Jones described it as if it was an alarm clock reminding him to wake from his dream. For years his reality had been daily parades and head counts, it was unbelievable that the bell simply signalled the time. It was unreal to be free, but Jones was disheartened to realise that his captivity continued to distort his experience. He was pessimistic that those lingering restrictions would ever be lifted.

For some POWs, their return to London was tarnished by the continued presence of the war. When they imagined the outside world, it was one of peace and abundance. It was difficult to have these perceptions challenged. This contrast was even more apparent for Hyde, because he had spent time in London before his captivity. He was startled during his return to the city, because there was:

nothing in the shops and an absolute feeling of drabness. The feeling of an embattled city completely beaten to its knees but not yet giving in, I felt that London and the civilian population seemed more 'down at heel' than those parts of Germany I had seen.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>AWMML, MS-2007-47, Osborn Jones, letter collection, undated letter from London, 1945.

<sup>70</sup>Hyde, *Personal Account*, p. 101.

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Hyde was struck by the emptiness he encountered. It was not only the lack of consumer products, but also the absence of warmth. Against the bleakness of the men's prison camps and the destruction they saw as they marched through Europe, London had been positioned as an idyllic destination. It represented civilisation instead of barbarism. Hyde was unnerved that the war had impacted the city so severely. For him, London would not be a place where he could transition back into civilian life; the war's continuing presence loomed too large.

Like Hyde, Warrant Officer Jack Elworthy had been to England before his captivity. Elworthy was similarly disappointed it:

seemed to be every man for himself. If I hadn't seen England in the summer of 1940 and during the Blitz, and carried an idealised picture of it with me for four years, I probably would not have felt things in the same way.<sup>71</sup>

He had constructed an idyllic image of England, and he was shocked when it did not live up to his expectations. Captivity was a place of scarcity and restrictions and Elworthy endured these hardships with the belief that they were temporary. However, he was upset to find they were still present post-captivity.

While the above examples highlighted the disappointment prisoners felt as they were rehabilitated, most enjoyed their time in Britain. Some men formed lasting connections with those they met on their travels. Coe recalled meeting his future wife at an Armed Forces club in London:

I found her to be bright, pleasant company. Gladys and I spent whatever time we had together. I was fortunate to have a friend who could suggest the interesting places and sights in and around London. She asked about New Zealand and said 'I'd love to go there, it sounds lovely.'<sup>72</sup>

More than offering a sense of stability during Coe's rehabilitation, the fledgling relationship between he and Gladys represented a fresh start. When Coe was with her he spoke about New Zealand with authority. It was a subject that was familiar to him, but unfamiliar to Gladys. These discussions were the inverse of what many prisoners experienced. They were usually the one's struggling to understand what had happened while they were in captivity. Talking about New Zealand, and a possible rendezvous there, was more than small talk; it was a reassertion that the future still held the hope and tranquillity that Coe had dreamed of during his captivity.

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<sup>71</sup>Jack Elworthy, *Greece, Crete, Stalag, Dachau: A New Zealand Soldier's Encounters with Hitler's Army* (Wellington: Awa Press, 2014), p. 207.

<sup>72</sup>Coe, unpublished ms, p. 49.

Even with the large number of prisoners needing to be processed and shipped back to New Zealand, most were on their way home after just a few months of rehabilitation.<sup>73</sup> This process began in May 1945 and by September only 300 repatriates remained in the Britain.<sup>74</sup> However, Elworthy had to wait over a year until he could return home. He remembered that:

It was another 16 months before I left England. They were not happy ones. I lived with rationing and moved from barracks to barracks. I was kept in the UK to be trained on some new equipment for the New Zealand Army, but I was not working with other New Zealanders and this made me feel even more isolated. When people remarked that I was a long way from home, I agreed, thinking not so much of the 12,000 miles as of the almost seven years I had been away.<sup>75</sup>

Rather than the freedom of civilian life, his liberation was replaced by the return of military routines. While different from captivity, his actions were restricted and his food was limited. His inability to connect with other New Zealanders emphasised his remoteness and reinforced his feelings that he did not belong there. The delay highlighted how his life had been impacted by the war and his captivity. Elworthy's statement ended with an uncomfortable realisation that was tinged with doubt; since he had been away so long, he was not sure what to expect when he finally returned home.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the men's rehabilitation was a liminal period between their imprisonment and their return to New Zealand. When they arrived in Britain they brought with them expectations of an idealised version of home, one which they had constructed to help them escape the daily privations of captivity. However, the men's transition out of captivity was complicated by their lingering feelings of shame and a loss of confidence. It was difficult to enact the fantasies they envisaged for themselves when they felt almost overwhelmed by a world that had moved on without them. Moreover, although there were arrangements to ease the prisoners into professional and educational programmes, Coe's inability to obtain educational assistance reinforced his belief that his time in captivity had been wasted. Nevertheless, some prisoners regained their confidence by testing their physical boundaries. Whether they travelled to the outer regions of Britain or had a weekend in London, these excursions reinforced a sense of agency which had been restricted from them in captivity. Others

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<sup>73</sup>NZH, 18 July 1945, p. 6.

<sup>74</sup>Mason, *Official History*, pp. 504-05.

<sup>75</sup>Elworthy, *Greece, Crete, Stalag, Dachau*, p. 215.

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struggled to reconcile their imagined image of post-captivity with the reality of a world ravaged by war. These accounts expressed a desire to experience something familiar and to inhabit a space which inspired a feeling of belonging. However, the war's continuing presence could trigger unpleasant memories from seemingly everyday events. In these moments, some dreamed of their return to New Zealand, somewhere which was far from the battlefields and prison camps of Europe.

**Beatrice Heuser & Athena S. Leoussi, *Famous Battles and How They Shaped the Modern World. Volume 1: c.1200 BCE – 1302 CE From Troy to Courtrai; & Volume 2: 1588 – 1943 From The Armada to Stalingrad.* Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2018. Volume 1 ix + 197pp. ISBN 978-1473893733 (hardback). Price £25.00; Volume 2 viii + 184pp. ISBN 978-1526727411 (hardback). Price £25.00.**

These enjoyable books have grand aspirations. They aim to demonstrate how the memory of battles can be used to achieve certain means, either intentionally or unintentionally; and seek to explore the impact this use of memory has had on the modern world. It enables a reader to understand how battles can crop up in foundational myths of both religion (the wars of the ancient Israelites) and countries (such as The Battle of Teutoburg Forest), and how interpretations change over the years; even encompassing shifting social structures (The Battle of Courtrai) and contemporary media (Stalingrad's relationship with cinema). In achieving its aim of alerting readers to the agendas underlying commemoration, they are exceptional.

The way Heuser and Leoussi have approached their ambitious objective is admirable. Acknowledgement of what the books are trying to achieve is very clearly set out in the introductions to each volume. By drawing together a stellar cast of contributors they have been able to include a range of superbly researched articles, and have had the confidence to rely on the expertise of their contributors. Each is unfailingly up-to-date and brimming with topical ideas. For instance, Mungo Melvin in Chapter 8 introduces his myth-busting analysis of the Somme by referencing the political headlines of Brexit from 2016 (the 100-year anniversary of the conflict). Immediately the reader's mind is focused on the pseudo-battle lines drawn in that 'conflict', from which Melvin deftly highlights the main misconceptions of the Somme.

These books will appeal to anyone looking to break out of the unintentional educational constraints that their school, university or peers have placed round them. They enable one to form a cynical view of how memory can be, and is, manipulated by humankind's endeavors. It is encouraging to see the attempt by each author, and the editors, to strive not to allow their interpretations to be coloured by their personal perspectives.

However, frustration comes in attempting to draw parallels between each article. It is largely up to the reader to decide whether the memory of ancient battles and modern conflicts will travel along the same road in each case, with the latter continually trying

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to catch up with the former in terms of development. The reader will struggle to draw a conclusion as to whether a memory develops in the same way over the years; passing through the phases of fervent nationalism, introspective embarrassment, and scientific scrutiny, that each can sometimes seem to touch upon; like a moody teenager growing up. It would be intriguing to see the editors attempting to tackle this overarching question in a conclusion and bring together the superb work done by the contributors for the sake of completeness.

An interesting aspect of these books is the informal poll drawn from colleagues of the editors in gathering an expert's view of the '*most famous*' battles. Leoussi is transparent in the intentionally Eurocentric focus this has, and deftly counters possible contention in the conclusions drawn from this list. The list itself is fascinating, and another example of the value of these books. It is again left to the reader to research each battle and decide on its own merit; but in this case it is gladdening. It is enlivening to be trusted with this rather than having a Wikipedia-esque diatribe of 'number of participants' or 'casualties' that are often used to list battles forced on one. The very qualitative aspect of this data itself highlights the way battles are remembered.

Likewise, the use of a school survey opens intriguing questions. It is an excellent idea to step away from how learned experts assess the myths of battles to look at them from an educational point of view and the survey itself an interesting window into living memory. It is also agreeable for the editors that both lists produced are similar. This raises a fascinating question with regard to who is being taught what, and how education differs per country. Leoussi is admirably open about the paucity of the sample size and the limits of the survey, but for the purpose of understanding how famous battles will continue to shape modern memory there is real value in exploring this subject throughout Europe. It seems harsh to ignore the Mediterranean countries in this or future surveys, particularly given the prominence of the great battles of Christendom in the books.

I have not drawn a distinction between Volume 1 (1200 BCE – 1302 CE) and Volume 2 (1588CE – 1943CE) as I firmly believe they should be read as one book. To form a proper understanding of how battles are represented in the modern world does require the complete review of the wide spectrum of historical context that these tomes provide, particularly given the continually developing interpretations driven by modern memory, technology and social changes. I give Heuser and Leoussi the benefit of the doubt and park my inner cynic that this isn't a devious marketing ploy; but it has been frustrating to carry two books around when one would have been more

convenient. Then again, as these books teach us in exemplary fashion, history isn't always convenient and transferable and perhaps it serves us to be cynical.

TIMOTHY FALLON  
Independent Scholar, UK

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**Cathal J. Nolan, *The Allure of Battle: A History of How Wars Have Been Won and Lost*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Notes. Plates. Bibliography. Index. 709pp. ISBN 978-0195383782 (hardback). Price £20.00.**

Over 16 chapters, Nolan discusses the true impact of battles in the context of the wars in which they were fought. History has tended to measure a war's winners and losers in terms of its major engagements, battles in which the result was so clear-cut that they could be considered "decisive." Marathon, Cannae, Tours, Agincourt, Austerlitz, Sedan, Stalingrad - all fixed in literature and in our imaginations as tide-turning. But were they? Nolan argues that victory in major wars has usually been determined in other ways. Even the most crushing of battles did not necessarily decide their outcomes: Rome lost Cannae but won the war. Nolan also challenges the concept of the "military genius," even of the "great captain". Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, Gustavus, Frederick, Napoleon are all firmly established in published works and in our minds as such. Thus, Nolan's book directly contradicts those of Creasy, Dodge and Fuller, dear to earlier generations. In that, Nolan reflects the time in which he writes, especially the protracted and costly conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.

Nolan systematically analyses the major wars between the great powers, from the Hundred Years War to the Second World War, tracing the illusion of "short-war thinking," the hope that victory might be swift and conflict brief. Nolan argues that the World Wars, the "people's wars", were characterised by stalemate and attrition and were wars in which the crucial arena was not the battlefield but the factory. Modern resource bases backed by national will can overcome a seemingly decisive first strike, as the Japanese found after Pearl Harbor.

It is true that not all great battles are decisive and not all decisive battles are great. Nolan rightly argues that Gettysburg was a great battle but not decisive while Vicksburg (fought at the same time on a much smaller scale) was decisive in that it cut the Confederacy in half. Nolan's argument that truly decisive battles are rare is a strong one. It can be argued that Marathon was merely a temporary check on Persian

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aspirations. It can be argued that had Napoleon won at Waterloo, he would have been defeated by other armies on other battlefields. It can be argued that Japan's defeat was inevitable even if it had won at Midway.

Nonetheless, Marathon, Waterloo and Midway are considered decisive by many historians. Marathon did not put a permanent stop to the Persians but it deterred them for a decade. Napoleon was irredeemably defeated at Waterloo and the Seventh Coalition might have come to terms if he had won. Most of Japan's carrier fleet was destroyed at Midway and the Imperial Japanese Navy forced onto the defensive.

The search for decisive battles in short wars has long been the holy grail of politicians and generals. The Wars of German Unification 1864-71 are often held up as the exemplar. But history does indeed show that they are the exception and not the rule. Nolan's study stops in 1945, yet it is pertinent to note that of the major wars since German unification, only the 1967 Six Day War and Operation Desert Storm in 1991 turned out to be the short sharp conflicts envisaged by their planners.

The book would have been better if it had been shorter. There is too much detail about battles that are irrelevant to the author's intended audience of non-military historians. There is also quite a bit of repetition. That said, Nolan's book is magisterial. In a sweeping study that ranges over Western military history, he places battles squarely within the context of the wider conflicts in which they took place. He dispels illusions that have distorted the understanding of armed conflict, demonstrating that battles are rarely decisive and that generals are rarely geniuses - and thus wars are rarely short and cheap. He replaces popular images with sombre appreciation. This challenging and controversial book demands to be read and reflected upon by everyone, including those professionally concerned with military history, military strategy and international relations. I have no doubt that it will spark debates about the history and conduct of war that will last for a long time to come.

JOHN PEATY  
Independent Scholar, UK

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**Jeffrey Rop, *Greek Military Service in the Ancient Near East 401-330 BCE*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. xxviii + 265pp. ISBN 978-1108499507 (hardcover). Price £75.**

In this revised version of his dissertation (completed at Pennsylvania State University, 2017) Jeffrey Rop seeks to assess the service of Greek military forces in Persia and Egypt during the final seven decades of the Achaemenid Empire (401-330 BCE). The Greek sources responsible for most of our knowledge on the topic portray Greek hoplites as mercenaries highly sought after throughout the ancient Near East (ANE) for their superior value as heavy infantry. They also portray the Persian military as in decline and heavily reliant upon Greek military aid. This view, which Rop (following Pierre Briant) calls “the Greek thesis,” remains influential. Rop seeks to challenge the Greek thesis and replace it with a more accurate alternative. In what follows I will summarize his argument and then assess its coherence and persuasiveness broadly and tentatively. The question of whether Rop succeeds in his reassessment of the many fine details that combine to support his overarching conclusions lies beyond the scope of this review.

Rop’s thesis runs as follows: Neither Persia nor Egypt were dependent upon Greek “mercenaries” for success, nor were the Greek hoplites or generals notably superior to Persian infantry and leadership. Rather, these Near Eastern empires hired Greeks as part of broader political alliances and reciprocal *xenia* (ξενία) relationships to supplement their forces. Greeks served the King or Pharaoh as political actors often highly loyal to their allies, not as opportunistic mercenaries desperate for pay. Furthermore, Greek naval and marine forces, not infantry, were especially valued by both Persians and Egyptians at several key junctures.

Rop develops his thesis by closely examining, in chronological order: the failed rebellion of Cyrus the younger (chapters 2 and 3); various engagements from 400-360 BC (chapter 4); the revolt of Artabazus (chapter 5); the recapture of Egypt by Persia (chapter 6); and the Macedonian invasion and ultimate conquest of Persia (chapters 7 and 8). He seeks to avoid the pitfall of dismissing the ancient Greek sources as biased out of hand without offering arguments for rejecting them. As a result, the strength of Rop’s investigation lies in its combination of close literary analysis of the sources with a keen strategic and tactical assessment of the conflicts involved.

For example, in chapter two he evaluates Xenophon’s *Anabasis* carefully against other relevant texts and evidence relating to Xenophon’s Greek forces serving with Cyrus the Younger at Cunaxa. He argues persuasively that Xenophon misleadingly employs a variety of literary embellishments to portray himself and the Greek forces in the

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best possible light. Xenophon uses focalization by describing in depth the Greek units and their activities while omitting details about other units in order to imply that the hoplites' actions were more consequential and successful than they were. He also uses tropes, portraying, a) Cyrus the Younger as a tragic advisor to absolve both Cyrus and the Greek hoplites of blame for Cyrus' loss; and b) the hoplites as dynamic subordinates to exaggerate their significance. Rop also analyses the strategy and tactics at Cunaxa, arguing convincingly—often on grounds of evidence internal to the *Anabasis*—that the battle offers no evidence for the superiority of the Greek infantry. Rather, it “reveals . . . that their ability to contribute positively was heavily circumstantial” and not very consequential.

The rest of the book shows how our Greek sources have employed focalization and literary tropes to skew the narrative in favour of the Greeks in the retelling of many conflicts. His military analysis similarly argues that the actual contributions of Greeks serving in the aNE, especially Greek heavy infantry, were neither particularly significant nor superior to that of their peers. The one exception to this rule, he argues, are the Greek naval forces, which seem to have been especially valued and valuable.

Rop argues his thesis cogently and persuasively. Yet it is built upon the accumulation of many smaller probabilistic conclusions, especially when it comes to his military analysis. His full argument, therefore, will have to be assessed one point at a time by a thorough consideration of each engagement, political maneuver, tactical decision, etc. Was the Greek contribution at Cunaxa truly insignificant? Were Darius's decisions at Issus and Gaugamela in fact competent, and not cowardly as the Greek sources allege? As *Greek Service* makes its impact, other specialists will need to evaluate Rop's proposed answers to these questions and many more like them if his thesis is to carry the day.

Although the book is not overly jargon-laden, and there are maps and figures to aid the reader, non-specialist readers seeking to learn more about Greek or aNE military history will need to commit to a careful reading to do so.

HUBERT JAMES KEENER  
Independent Scholar, USA

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**Charles D. Stanton, *Roger of Lauria (c.1250-1305) 'Admiral of Admirals'*. The Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 2019. ix + 336pp. ISBN 978-1783274536 (hardback). Price £65.00.**

The Aragonese admiral, Roger of Lauria, is not well known among medievalists, even among those interested in warfare and shipping. He was however an astonishing successful naval commander who managed to defeat a variety of foes in encounters fought across the Mediterranean, most particularly those surrounding the conflict known as the War of Sicilian Vespers. This work by Charles D. Stanton serves to draw attention to the martial achievements of this ruthlessly competent admiral set against the backdrop of the dramatic events of his time. Stanton himself has published extensively on Mediterranean naval warfare in the central Medieval period, his major works being: *Medieval Maritime Warfare* and *Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean*.

*Roger of Lauria 'Admiral of Admirals'* is a sustained narrative covering the unfolding horrors of the wars fought over Sicily and Southern Italy between the 1260s and the early Fourteenth Century. It charts the variable fortunes of the various major factions involved, chiefly: the Angevins who staked their claim to their region under Charles of Anjou following his victories over the Hohenstaufen rulers of Italy and Sicily in the 1260s, and also their Aragonese opponents who, under Peter III and his heirs, contested Angevin rule. Other protagonists, including the kings of France and Castile; the leaders of a resurgent Byzantium as well as the papacy; and North African rulers serve to complete the picture.

The history of these wars is dizzyingly complex, consisting of tens of invasions, naval battles and sieges. However, the major vector lines within this conflict were the rapid rise in Angevin fortunes in the 1260s and 1270s, followed by the sudden advent of the Aragonese who conquered Sicily in 1282. There followed a long period of fighting and failed truces which engulfed much of the Western Mediterranean, with the conflict focused particularly on Sicily and Calabria, but also incorporating a French Crusade into Aragon in 1285. The two sides eventually reached a stalemate with the Angevins retaining much of southern Italy and the Sicilian King Frederick III (Aragonese by extraction but estranged from his brother King James II of Aragon) holding-onto Sicily itself.

Roger of Lauria built his reputation within this conflict. For a long time he was a staunch supporter of Aragonese interests, but his relationship with Frederick III of Sicily later collapsed, leading his career into a more politically ambiguous phase. Amidst these wars, Roger manifested a talent for naval warfare and he won six major battles at sea as well as numerous other encounters. His success is presented here as

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rooted in a wide range of factors. These include his strenuous efforts to keep his sailors/soldiers motivated and resourced, linked to his ability to make effective use of both the fabled Catalan crossbowmen and the much-feared *almogavars* (whose death-dealing exploits run through much of this work). Roger himself was a very capable strategist and it is interesting to see the use he made of feigned-flight tactics to win several major encounters. However, his track-record was more mixed in encounters fought on land. Roger's deeds are reported throughout this study, but - in balance - this work is more a history of the Sicilian Vespers, than it is a biography of Roger's life.

Several thought-provoking points emerge from this work. Firstly, it is notable that the major naval powers of Genoa, Pisa and Venice *did not* play a decisive role in deciding the outcome of this predominantly-naval Angevin/Aragonese conflict. Despite their former maritime supremacy, it was Catalan-Sicilian and Angevin fleets which dominated the Western Mediterranean with the Italian cities playing little more than an auxiliary role. It is especially notable where Stanton discusses James II of Aragon's naval raid -led by Roger of Lauria- into the Adriatic and the Aegean in 1302, which damaged both Venetian and Genoese interests, that neither power sought redress for the injuries they had suffered. At this point at least, Aragon-Sicily ruled supreme.

It is also notable how little the troubles of the Crusader States impinged on these powers' thought-worlds, despite the fact that they were among the Christian states best placed to intervene. Stanton does a very effective job of demonstrating how closely the papacy tracked the Angevin-Aragonese conflict with only sporadic efforts – none successful – to galvanise the major players into a major campaign to the east. Indeed, on those occasions when the Aragonese sought to wage war along Christendom's frontiers it was nearly always against the Muslim territories of North Africa; more rarely against the Byzantines.

Reflecting on this work and its place within current scholarship, the contemporary vogue among historians generally tends towards thematic rather than narrative history – and even those authors who do offer a narrative element to their work generally include very substantial thematic asides. Consequently, *Roger of Lauria 'Admiral of Admirals'* may, to some, feel rather old-fashioned, being overwhelmingly a political-military narrative. There is a brief thematic section of naval warfare in chapter 10, but little more. I would argue, by contrast, that this work serves to restate the importance of detailed, well-researched narrative histories. The War of Sicilian Vespers was an extremely complex and tortuous conflict and it is recreated here with lucidity, authority and insight. Mostly importantly, Stanton never gives way to the temptation of summarising complicated histories but works through the events blow-by-blow. His sure-footed ability to view the conflict in such detail and in the *longue-durée* is highly important and allows the reader to grasp the broader lines of development

which shaped this region's profile and character. In short - a model political-military history.

NICHOLAS MORTON  
Nottingham Trent University, UK

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**Charles J. Esdaile, *Walking Waterloo: A Guide*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2019. xix + 300pp. ISBN 978-1526740786 (paperback). Price £16.99.**

'I rode to a hill where there had been a battle [...]. There was nothing to see. Nothing to touch or hear. And yet somehow there was.' This extract from Kevin Crossley-Holland's novel *Arthur: King of the Middle March* brilliantly captures the unique atmosphere that shrouds battlefields. By their nature, battlefields are unremarkable contours of an emotionless landscape formed thousands of years ago, yet they are simultaneously imbued with a historical and emotional significance by the chaos and bloodshed they witnessed.

Battlefield visitors will know the challenge of reconciling the tranquillity of these locations with the violence which made them so remarkable. Perhaps the greatest difficulty though, is knowing precisely what they are looking at, for whilst the narrative of a battle may be well known, identifying the precise locations of a battle's pivotal episodes can be difficult in a relatively featureless landscape. Battlefield guides are invaluable in addressing these problems.

The Battle of Waterloo, one of the most famous, and most written about, battles in history, is well served with battlefield guides. Uffindell's *On the Fields of Glory* offered sage advice, useful maps, and, vitally, a consideration of Prussian operations. However, a gold standard was set by David Buttery's detailed, engaging and beautifully illustrated *Waterloo: Battlefield Guide*.

*Walking Waterloo: A Guide* therefore faces strong competition, something which is acknowledged by its author, Charles Esdaile. The publication is based on a tour guide app created in association with the Belgian War Heritage Institute, which is available for download. The app is itself a very valuable resource, and it is a shame that more is not made of it, given its portability, impressive layout, and relevance in the modern era.

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Nonetheless, *Walking Waterloo* is equally impressive. The book has been printed using high-quality paper and a strong spine to ensure that the volume will withstand sudden downpours or rough treatment in a traveller's bag. Colour photographs, taken by the author specifically to illustrate this volume, are used extensively and are useful in helping the reader orientate themselves. The photographs serve an additional purpose, illustrating wider points made by Esdaile about the nature of the landscape. This book therefore amply demonstrates its points irrespective of whether the reader is on the battlefield.

The benefits of using this book to tour the battlefield cannot be overstated. Its layout is intelligent, being the first book ever to offer bespoke tours of the field, which are broken down into instructions that guide the reader to important locations, followed by careful analysis of the events which occurred around each location. The walking instructions are clear and precise, making each tour easy to follow, although readers deviating from the instructions should retrace their steps carefully when re-joining the tour, as 'cutting corners' can lead to readers becoming lost.

Particularly evocative is Esdaile's inclusion of extracts from accounts written by soldiers of all nationalities and ranks to bring the battle alive. The result is the moving experience of reading the words of those who fought at Waterloo whilst standing on the very ground on which those events took place. This is a masterstroke for engaging readers on a personal level.

Another of *Walking Waterloo's* strengths is that, in addition to a 'grand tour' of Waterloo, the book contains smaller tours of other important locations on the field, totalling a remarkable 32 hours of tours. Furthermore, Esdaile does not duplicate material where his tours inevitably overlap, with each tour offering its own insights, and having a unique flavour. This variety ensures that the book offers perspectives on the British, Dutch, Prussian and French experiences of the battle. Crucially, a thorough tour is offered of the Prussian approach to the battlefield, a less well understood topic for which *Walking Waterloo* has filled an important void.

The guide is also laced with thoughtful additions. At the start of each tour is a comment on ground condition, and the length of time it should take. Esdaile has highlighted points where sections of the tour can be skipped if the reader's time is limited, and for those who are not familiar with the battle, its historical context, and the armies and their commanders are covered in brief and cogent chapters at the start of the book. Most importantly, the book contains excellent maps, which not only show how various stages of the battle unfolded, but also pinpoint locations in the tours themselves.

However, *Walking Waterloo* is far more than a guide to a well-known battlefield. Esdaile has brought a fresh perspective to the field, carefully examining the terrain and considering whether the oft-repeated stories about the battle are realistic when one stands on the landscape itself. The book therefore offers a highly persuasive re-evaluation of commonly held beliefs about the battle, including questioning how it is possible for the collapse of the imperial guard to have shattered the morale of the entire French army, when a ridge of high ground makes it impossible to see from one half of the field to the other. The advantage of presenting this information in a battlefield guide is that the visitor only needs to look up from the book to see the evidence for themselves.

The only notable omission is the absence of tours for Quatre Bras, and Ligny, which were important battles of the Waterloo campaign. Whilst this was necessitated by a lack of space, it is disappointing that they were not integrated into the book, perhaps as a unique download.

Overall, In *Walking Waterloo* Charles Esdaile has achieved the historian's 'Holy Grail'. This is a significant book for historians, which will also inspire the public to know more about this crucial battle. The reader is not only informed about discussions at the cutting edge of historical debate, but is physically involved in that process, being invited to investigate Esdaile's conclusions for themselves. This is quite simply one of the most important books on Waterloo to have been written in 200 years.

ZACK WHITE  
University of Southampton, UK

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**Fergus O'Farrell, *Cathal Brugha*. Dublin: UCD Press, 2018. xv + 111 pp. ISBN 978-1910820278 (paperback). Price £15.50**

This short book is the first English-language biography of Cathal Brugha (born Charles William St John Burgess in Dublin in 1874). Portraits in Irish by Sceilg (J.J. O'Kelly) and Tomás Ó Dochartaigh were published in the 1940s and 1960s respectively and are dismissed by the author as hagiography. This neglect may seem unusual, not least given the explosion of biographical and prosopographical work on Irish revolutionaries in recent decades. Nor was Brugha a bit-part player: severely wounded in the 1916 Easter Rising; elected MP for Waterford in 1918 and subsequently a Teachta Dála and minister for defence in the underground Dáil Éireann government during the Irish War of Independence; one of the key opponents of the Anglo-Irish Treaty; and an early but

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prominent casualty of the Irish Civil War. The absence of a serious study of Brugha is even more glaring when compared to the enduring fascination with figures like Michael Collins and Éamon de Valera, but becomes somewhat more understandable when reading O'Farrell's book.

If the outline and trajectory of Brugha's life is easily told, O'Farrell has had to work hard to account for his subject's beliefs and motivations. Brugha was 'was no political theorist. We do not know what books he read and he left no record of his thoughts on political systems' (p. 10). He also preferred to work 'in the shadows' (p. 56) and was particularly reticent about committing anything to paper. This might be expected of a minister in an underground, illegal government in the midst of a guerrilla war but was actually unusual by the standard of some contemporaries who – perhaps unwisely but to the immense benefit of historians – hoarded abundant paperwork. Much of what we know about Cathal Brugha, therefore, comes through the mediated voices of others.

Nevertheless, O'Farrell has constructed a thesis that is clearly articulated at the outset and argued throughout the book: Brugha has been incorrectly typecast as a republican extremist and 'arch-militarist' (p. 3) and instead operated in something of a middle ground where politics and violence worked hand in hand; even after the republican split in 1922 Brugha was 'too purist for the pragmatists, too pragmatic for the purists' (p. 5). Brugha, for instance, pushed the oath of allegiance that brought the republican army under the control of the Dáil, and was much more concerned about civilian casualties than some of his colleagues (though, as a married man and father, reckless with his own safety). Even Brugha's ambitious but abortive plans to assassinate the British Cabinet – returned to seriously twice more after the initial plan was cancelled in 1918 – is explained by the author with reference to a belief that it was the politicians who were ultimately responsible for British policy in Ireland and therefore legitimate targets for political assassination.

Brugha's interaction with other leading revolutionaries, particularly Collins, de Valera, and Richard Mulcahy (chief of staff of the IRA and, like Collins, technically Brugha's inferior), gets significant attention. Relations with Collins were famously sour and culminated in Brugha's bitter and much criticized attack on Collins during debates on the Anglo-Irish Treaty. It was only after 1920 that Brugha's relationship with Mulcahy began to break down, but this was all part of a process whereby more effective and energetic comrades effectively usurped control of the army. At the same time, much of the conflict took place beyond the direct influence of headquarters anyway – especially in Munster.

Brugha makes for an intriguing guerrilla minister for defence. He refused to take a Dáil salary and remained in his day job running a candle-makers. Undoubtedly brave and

committed, he could also be intransigent, aloof, and cantankerous. It is therefore very easy to see Brugha as a 'die-hard' among the opponent of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Instead, the author argues, he was among the 'moderates' in that cohort. Even still, Brugha was never afraid to die for Ireland and the book ends with his death on 7 July 1922 after a shootout with pro-Treaty National Army forces – heroic or foolish (or both) depending on your view. A useful follow-up project would explore the impact of Brugha's death on Anti-Treatyites and the Civil War, his place in Irish republican iconography, and the lives and careers of his wife, children, and descendants – all beyond the scope of this short, clearly defined study.

The author has generally made good use of the limited source material available. Recollections in interviews given to Ernie O'Malley, not cited here, may have added some additional touches but would correspond largely with what is presented in the book. O'Farrell is wisely skeptical of such retrospective testimony anyway, though perhaps unhelpfully speculates that Éamonn Ceannt's call to never again surrender to the enemy, composed before his execution in 1916, 'echoed in Brugha's ears for the rest of his revolutionary career' (p. 25). Similar rhetorical flourishes can jar a little, and there is also some carelessness with the spelling of names, particularly Irish names.

But on the whole, while seeking to challenge what he sees as poorly formed, and even unfair, treatments of Brugha by most historians, O'Farrell is thoughtful and judicious. His argument is clearly articulated and deserves considered attention from scholars of the military history of the period. This is also an attractive and accessible volume that will appeal to the very large group of general readers interested in the key personalities of the Irish Revolution. Scholars interested in the interaction between politics and militarism in irregular wars might also consider looking to Brugha as a useful case study. Cathal Brugha remains a very tricky subject for biography, but this book should – as the author intends – prompt a more sustained reevaluation of a republican icon.

BRIAN HUGHES

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland

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**Marnie Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish Revolution, 1909-23: Scouting for Rebels*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019. xiii + 273pp. ISBN: 978-0719096839 (hardback). Price £80.00.**

Marnie Hay's study of Na Fianna Éireann, the Irish National Boy Scouts, in 1909-23 is a valuable addition to literature on the Irish Revolution, and is also an important contribution to wider work on militarism across during this period. Founded in 1909 by Bulmer Hobson and Countess Markiewicz, at a time when other scouting-type organisations were being formed in Britain and Ireland, the Fianna had a similar militaristic tone to the activities of, for example, Baden-Powell's movement. Arguably, the Fianna were more important militarily than any other scouting organisation anywhere else. Indeed, Pádraig Pearse argued that the Irish Volunteers formed in 1913 'would never have arisen' had it not been for the formation of the Fianna four years before, not least because the Fianna had created a body of drilled and trained young men who were capable of organising the Volunteers. The military significance of the Fianna did not simply rest in being the progenitor of the Irish Volunteers. Fianna members played their own active part in the Easter Rising of 1916, during which seven members of the Fianna were killed.

Hay's thematic approach to the subject enables rigorous analysis of matters such as the type of activities engaged in by the Fianna, along with consideration of ideas of militarism and the question of who joined the Fianna. Hay stresses that there is already a narrative history of the Fianna (Damian Lawlor, *Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish Revolution, 1909-1923* (Rhode, Co, Offaly: Caoillte Books, 2009), but she still provides enough description of the story of the Fianna to allow readers not previously familiar with the group to understand what it did and when.

Some of the most valuable insights into the Fianna come in the chapter on who joined. There is a fair amount of archival detail available on some Fianna members in the Irish Republican Army's pension records and in the Bureau of Military History's Witness Statements. Indeed, sometimes the amount of information can be a little daunting and so Hay has appropriately sampled from three sources – the pensions records and witness statements mentioned above, and the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* which provides information on some of the more prominent members. That enables Hay to, for example, build up a picture of links between the Fianna and groups such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood finding the strongest links between the two in Dublin. Perhaps a little more could have been said about social class which is really only dealt with in one paragraph. However, this can be difficult to do rigorously with necessarily small samples and would possibly be more appropriately placed in regional studies

which Hay points to as being an obvious next step for anyone wishing to build on her work.

Beyond those with interests in Irish history, readers of this book interested in the impact of militarism on society across Europe will find much with which to engage. Increasingly, histories of the Irish Revolution range beyond Ireland in situating the factors of the revolution in wider international developments. Marnie Hay's book is a strong indicator of the benefits of such an approach.

RICHARD S. GRAYSON  
Goldsmiths, University of London, UK

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**Okan Ozseker, *Forging the Border: Donegal and Derry in Times of Revolution, 1911 - 1925*. Kildare: Irish Academic Press, 2019. 302pp. ISBN 978-788550703 (paperback). Price £17.99.**

This book is the latest in a long line of studies that seek to explore the revolutionary period in Ireland through the prism of local analysis. In this case Ozseker builds on templates provided by David Fitzpatrick, Marie Coleman and John Borgonovo by focusing on the counties of Donegal and Derry, examining the context, course and consequences of the war revolution there. The result is a strong book that fills a significant gap in the historical literature of the period and explains the complexity of the area in an accessible and credible manner.

One of the great strengths of this work is that it builds a coherent picture of the intricacy of the region. Donegal was split into two areas: a Catholic dominated, poor and mountainous seaboard, and a richer, more fertile eastern half which contained a majority of Protestants. Added to this was the fact that the north east of the county had far more in common with the city of Derry than the rest of the county, meaning that when the border between the Free State and Northern Ireland solidified in 1922, Derry was cut off from a large section of its natural economic and social hinterland. Donegal was also extremely poor, contained little in the way of infrastructure, was plagued by emigration and the county was taken into the Congested Districts Board (CDB) in 1909. In political terms too, the region was complex. Donegal was dominated by the moderate nationalism of the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), while the county of Londonderry was staunchly unionist; between these two poles was the city of Derry which contained an explosive mixture of the two.

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One of the aims of the book is to explain the relative calm of the area during the years 1919 to 1921, when the IRA was conducting a fierce insurgency against British rule across the island. The region was within the remit of the 1st Northern Division of the IRA, which was itself organised into four battalions, covering the county of Donegal, the city of Derry and a portion of the county of Tyrone. Ozseker agrees with David Fitzpatrick's theory that a combination of the strong tradition of moderate nationalism and the presence of a large unionist population, who were hostile to any form of Irish independence, meant there was little support for IRA operations. Indeed, it was not until the end of August 1920 that the first attack on a police barracks was carried out at Drumquin. However, the low level of IRA activity still provoked a harsh response from the authorities and Ozseker makes a compelling argument that the RIC and the British army were responsible for extra-judicial killings from September 1920 onwards. He is also critical of the IRA in Donegal, suggesting that it was badly organised, suffered from a lack of ruthlessness and shied away from ambushes in which the rebels might suffer casualties. The city of Derry, on the other hand, was not tranquil and was convulsed by riots in June 1920, but even here the IRA found it difficult to maintain the struggle in the face of opposition from the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and local ex-servicemen. These were obstacles that the IRA in other parts of the island did not have to face, thus reinforcing Ozseker's original point that Donegal/Derry was not typical of the country.

The truce, treaty and consequent civil war between June 1922 and May 1923 was particularly complicated in the region and Ozseker explores this in particularly competent fashion. Donegal was resolutely supportive of the treaty which established the Irish Free State, which severely hampered the ability of the local IRA to attack the structures of the newly established Northern Ireland. The Belfast government also introduced internment, further restricting IRA activities. The first actions of note were the clash between Free State and British troops in the border towns of Belleek and Pettigo in May 1922, both of which were resounding victories for the British. While the Donegal IRA was pro-treaty, there was an influx of anti-treaty members from the south, as well as from across the border where the IRA was escaping Stormont's crackdown. The result was that the area saw far more violence during the civil war of 1922-23 than it did during the conflict with the British from 1919-21, and the Free State government executed four men in retaliation for the deaths of Free State soldiers at the hands of the anti-Treaty IRA.

The book concludes with a sense of unfinished business; the report of the Boundary Commission in 1925 was rapidly suppressed once Dublin discovered that it recommended transferring some areas of Donegal to Northern Ireland and the two Irish governments agreed to maintain the border as it was. Ozseker argues that the newly hardened border had severe economic and political repercussions in Donegal

and Derry, restricting investment in the area and providing the seeds for future conflict. Both unionists in Donegal and nationalists in Derry felt alienated and abandoned and it was therefore little surprise that Derry provided the eventual spark that ignited the Troubles in 1969. Like other books of this type, women are largely absent, except for some references to Cumann na mBan. Otherwise, Ozseker has provided a deep context to the border and shown its complexity in Irish history – those seeking to understand the current situation surrounding Brexit and its potential effects in the region would be well advised to add this to their reading list.

BERNARD KELLY  
Historian in Residence  
Dublin City Library and Archives, Ireland

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**Wendell Schollander, *The Glory of the Empires, 1880-1914: The Illustrated History of the Military Uniforms and Traditions of Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States*. Stroud: The History Press, 2018. Notes. Bibliography. Index. 896pp. ISBN 978-0752486345 (hardback). Price £50.00.**

Wendell Schollander presents an ambitious body of research in his book, *The Glory of the Empires*, in which he tracks the development of military uniforms between 1880 and 1914 in Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States. Schollander is not a traditionally trained military historian. He instead brings to his research an extremely organised and detailed methodology, which is especially suited to this kind of meticulous investigation. A seasoned American attorney, Schollander systematically builds research cases for each type of military uniform in the book, as if he was providing evidence in a court of law. This is exactly what is needed in a book like this: the topic dictates the best methodology, and Schollander delivers it. His writing and the book's structure ensure accessibility in an otherwise overwhelming area of research.

Section 1 of the book provides a brief overview, which includes data concerning land area of major empires prior to the First World War and their original size, a useful comparison of ranks across countries, and a diagram showing six different types of sleeve cuffs that are referenced throughout the book.

Section 2 covers military uniforms of the British Empire, with a country background, and information about the army and uniforms. The section then goes into detail

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concerning General Staff, Guard Cavalry, The Foot Guards Regiments, Line Cavalry, Line Infantry, West India Regiment, West African Regiment, King's African Rifles, West African Frontier Force, The Malay State Guides, Egypt and the Sudan, Hong Kong Regiment, and the Chinese Regiment.

Section 3 covers military uniforms of India, with a country background, and information about the army and uniforms. The section then goes into detail concerning General Staff, Cavalry, Infantry, and Gurkhas.

Section 4 covers military uniforms of the French Empire, with a country background, and information about the army and uniforms. The section then goes into detail concerning General Staff, Cavalry, Infantry, North African Army, North African Infantry, Colonial Infantry, Sahara Tirailleurs and Spahis and the Compagnies Sahariennes.

Section 5 covers military uniforms of Russia, with a country background, and information about the army and uniforms. The section then goes into detail concerning General Staff, Guard Cavalry, Guard Infantry, Line Cavalry, Steppes (or Plains) Cossacks, Caucasus (or Mountain) Cossacks, The Native Horse Regiments, The Line Infantry and Grenadiers, Line Rifles, and Cossack Infantry.

Section 6 covers military uniforms of the German Empire, with a country background, and information about the army and uniforms. The section then goes into detail concerning General Staff, Prussian Guard Infantry, Prussian Cavalry, Bavarian Cavalry, Saxon Cavalry, Line Infantry, Jägers and Schützen (Rifles), and Overseas Troops.

Section 7 covers military uniforms of the American Empire, with a country background, and information about the army and uniforms. The section then goes into detail concerning General Staff, Cavalry and Infantry, which includes Philippine Scouts and Porto Rico (as it was then spelled) Regiment of Infantry.

The book also includes 46 pages of historic colour illustrations and photographs (inserted between pp. 528-529), which are phenomenal in that they provide contemporary depictions of military uniforms and accoutrements, in full colour. A plethora of black-and-white images are riddled throughout the book. The more than 800 colour and black-and-white images are vital to the success of this book as they illustrate that which the author has described in the text. This book allows the reader to read holistically or simply dip in and out, as and when necessary.

There are some logical flaws with the book. The depth and breadth of this book is unlike other more traditional (and narrow) books about military uniforms. The wide scope of this book is both its strength and weakness. The sub-title of the book stated

that Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States would be included, in this order. Yet, the order in which the nations are actually presented in the book are: British Empire (185 pages in length), India (190 pages in length), French Empire (76 pages in length), Russia (170 pages in length), German Empire (189 pages in length), and American Empire (25 pages in length). India, with its completely separate section, warranted inclusion in the title of this book as India represents the largest section at 190 pages. The American Empire section at 25 pages in length demanded more data and critical analyses, as does the French Empire section at 76 pages.

This book is a cursory survey of a vast amount of information, and for what it is, it succeeds. In a perfect world, though, it would have been ideal to split apart the research to create six separately published books that would have enabled more robust expansion into each geographical region. The author has delivered an excellent overview of military uniforms in these disparate regions, but the reader is left wanting more. As a reference book, the reader would have appreciated footnotes instead of endnotes, more reliance on primary sources instead of secondary sources, more colour images, and a comprehensive glossary. These minor criticisms aside, Schollander's *The Glory of the Empires, 1880-1914*, is an engaging book that demonstrates the importance of military uniforms as equipment that distinguishes geographical loyalty and national traditions. This book is essential to any library that values a unique perspective of military history and clothing design.

JENNIFER DALEY  
King's College London, UK

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**Oliver Wilkinson, *British Prisoners of War in First World War Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. xiv + 308pp. ISBN 978-1316648872 (hardcover). Price £71.00.**

The British prisoner of war (POW) in the Second World War is a prominent figure in the cultural history of Britain. Names like Colditz and Stalag Luft have been immortalised by the attempted breakouts of British prisoners and their subsequent portrayal in popular media, most famously with *The Great Escape* (1963). Yet despite more British POWs being captured in the First World War (185,329, compared to the Second World War, 172,592), they have no such prominence. Building on an expanding catalogue of works by Gerald H. Davis and Heather Jones among others, which have examined the POW experience in the First World War, this superlative work marks the first dedicated study on the British military POW camps under

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German control. Oliver Wilkinson attempts to 'write the British POWs back into the history of the First World War' by examining their experiences in captivity.

This is an important area of study not just for the experiences of the soldiers, but also for our understanding of masculinity, gender, and social roles. It is well acknowledged that the British soldier in the First World War was idealised as a bastion of masculinity. But capture by the enemy is a process of disempowerment, signified by the giving up of arms to the enemy and raising hands in submission. This could mean failure as a soldier and, consequently, failure as a man. Nor did this perception only affect the soldier, but their families and communities also. Wilkinson's work is therefore able to enhance our understanding of a defining experience for many British servicemen, but also our understanding of British society, and the interaction between gender and the soldier.

To do this Wilkinson deploys an extensive source base, split into two different methodological approaches labelled parts one and two. Part one sets out the landscape of captivity and examines how authority and control functioned within the POW camps. This begins with the process of capture, examines the camp structures, the routine, work and discipline systems within camp, and the provision of necessities. To achieve this, official documents are utilised to construct a framework of captivity and life as POW. These include reports on camps by neutral inspectors, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Young Men's Christian Association, formal investigation into camp conditions, formal complaints about POW treatment, records of political negotiations, and published accounts by officials involved in POW work. The framework is then filled in by prisoners' diaries, letters, debrief reports, personal testimonies, POW magazines, memoirs and more. Wilkinson blends these two differing source bases together in exemplary fashion and provides a highly convincing picture of life as a POW. Of particular interest was the experience of capture, and the disempowerment and psychological shock faced by soldiers who underwent it, the moral quandary faced by many prisoners of being made to work for the Germans, and whether this constituted aiding the enemy, and how camp life and the discipline within it marked a continuation of army life for many.

Part two then acts as a compliment to this by redirecting its focus onto the prisoners within the camps and letting the voices from below carry the analysis. This section is reliant on the 3,000 reports taken during the war with exchanged, repatriated, and escaped POWs by the Committee on the Treatment of British Prisoners of War in Enemy Hands of which 300 were sampled. Alongside these are the diaries, letters, paraphernalia and personal testimony of POWs. This section provides a much more grounded view of life as a POW. One particular strength is Wilkinson's illumination of how resistance and attempts to escape, whilst not being official policy, were a way for soldiers to re-conceptualise themselves as still being active in the war. Whilst there

were too many important findings for all to be identified, that the function of military hierarchies was continued as a response to psychological and physical challenges, how prisoner communities developed and went on to become a lasting legacy of captivity for many former POWs, and how letters and parcels from home became the most important element of captive life in the view of the majority of POWs all have important consequences for our understanding of the soldier and his identity during the war.

Identifying areas for improvement with this work is difficult and is open to accusations of reviewer bias. However, greater levels of comparison with how other nations treated German POWs would have provided a useful context for evaluating the experience of British POWs. Whilst there are occasional references, especially to how Germany treated Russian POWs, it remains inconsistent. Due to the cultural currency of POWs in the Second World War, an element of comparison between experiences in the two wars may have benefited by highlighting certain differences and continuities, though Wilkinson does note he understandably wishes to avoid 'back shadowing'.

In summary an excellent work on an underexplored topic which poses critical questions as to our understanding of gender, society, and the British soldiers experience of war. As such it should appeal to any historian examining the junction of the above subjects and how they interacted.

HARRY SANDERSON  
University of Leeds, UK

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**Susan R. Grayzel & Tammy M. Proctor (ed.), *Gender and the Great War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Notes. Index. 283pp. ISBN 978-0190271084 (paperback). Price £20.00.**

This beautifully-presented edited volume offers an introduction to the major themes of gender scholarship on the First World War, treading a balance between established and emerging scholarship and pointing forwards to new approaches and areas of enquiry. The contributions are ordered thematically, each chapter drawing together and expanding current thinking on the topic under consideration. Taken together, the 12 chapters show the range of wartime experiences and the ways in which gender intersects with age, class and race as well as cultural and geographic contexts to shape both the war experience itself and the ways in which it is remembered and

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commemorated, while a 13<sup>th</sup> chapter offers a brief outline of key works taking a women's or gender history approach to the First World War.

In Karen Hunt's insightful chapter, 'Gender and Everyday Life', we are confronted with the absolute centrality of the everyday to the wartime experience, especially food supply during times of great shortages and uncertain access. She notes that 'everyday life is saturated with gender' (p.154), demonstrating that food queues were predominantly made up of women, whose primary responsibility for providing for the family was never seriously challenged, despite the increasing intervention of the state in domestic choices at all levels. Hunt challenges the claim that the 'home front' was feminised, reminding us that 'men were present and crucially still held power' (p.156).

This is picked up in Susan Grayzel's chapter, 'Gender and Warfare', which reminds us that the First World War challenged the accepted division of a feminised home and a masculine war zone. Grayzel shows that new methods of warfare, such as aerial bombing and the weaponizing of access to food, brought the war into the heart of the home front, while the deployment of poison gas fundamentally changed the experience of war for front soldiers. This chapter includes a consideration of the effects of highly gendered mass propaganda, often foregrounding accounts of violence against women in occupied territories, that drew civilians into the war in unprecedented ways. Grayzel identifies the militarisation of domestic spaces and the full incorporation of women into the war as 'a central legacy of the Great War' (p.183).

In her chapter, 'Gender and Age', Tammy Proctor makes a compelling case for the relevance of age as an often overlooked category that shaped the different experiences of war. Her chapter makes us aware of the range of war experiences that were determined by age, including a study of children's particular vulnerabilities to the effects of undernourishment and to state propaganda, and their conscription into war work at home, school and in youth organisations.

Consistent editorial guidance is obvious in the structure and content of the individual chapters and the extremely helpful ways in which they point forward to new questions and further areas of scholarship, but nonetheless quibbles remain. There is some unevenness between chapters in terms of the focus on men's and women's experience, with a tendency to foreground work on women's history, in the realisation of the aim of embracing more global scholarship, and in the patchy coverage of the post-war period. There is of course overlap between chapters, with issues of violence, race and class appearing in several contexts, and some instances where authors take different views. This might have been an opportunity for chapters and authors to enter into dialogue by cross-referencing, acknowledge the inevitability of overlap, and explicitly address and clarify differences in interpretation.

The volume is distinctive in the field for a number of reasons: first for its thematic approach, which allows it to move beyond the study of particular nation states and the best-known theatres of war and, importantly, to consider the way gender impacted on both men and women; secondly for the range and coherence of the volume due to its origins in linked round table presentations; and thirdly for the consistency of the contributions in terms of clarity of writing and level of scholarship. Taken as a whole, the volume both reflects and shapes the interest in new historical perspectives prompted by the centenary of the First World War and will be of interest to established scholars as well as those new to the field.

INGRID SHARP  
University of Leeds, UK

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**Robb Robinson, *Fishermen, the Fishing Industry and the Great War at Sea: A Forgotten History?* Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2019. 216pp. ISBN 978-1786941756 (hardback). Price £75.00.**

In *Fishermen, the Fishing Industry and the Great War at Sea*, Robb Robinson seeks to rectify a 'traditional' view of the First World War at sea that has tended to focus on the Royal Navy, the U-boat menace, and the vituperative debate over the use of convoys. Over the course of eight chapters, Robinson draws upon a combination of Admiralty records, newspaper reports, and parliamentary papers to present a lively account of the role played by Britain's 100,000-strong fishing industry in the conflict. Readers new to the subject will learn much about the experiences of civilians thrust into the challenging circumstances of a global war, and Robinson's ability to narrate the fates and fortunes of numerous vessels provides much of great value to the historian of the period.

After a very brief introduction, the first chapter concentrates on the fishing industry before the war and stresses the size and complexity of the work undertaken all around the British coast alongside the nascent links between the industry and the Royal Navy in what turned out to be the final years of peace. The book then records the activities of civilian fishermen mobilised to augment Britain's naval strength in three chapters, which concentrate on events around the British coast to the end of 1917. The narrative is then interrupted with two chapters, which cover events further afield and the impact of the war upon the fishing industry, before the final year of the war and

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the aftermath of the conflict are dealt with. A brief conclusion provides the reader with statistical information that could have been more fruitfully deployed within the main body of the text. There are a number of photographs reproduced in the book, but in many cases the content of the images does not align with the narrative.

The chief frustration with *Fishermen, the Fishing Industry and the Great War at Sea*, however, is that it does not go beyond alluding to some of the more fascinating insights that the subject has to offer. 'The class and cultural gap between working fishermen and many R[oyal] N[avy] officers was enormous', notes the book's abstract. Yet the ways in which these challenges of civil-military relations were navigated remains unexplored. Robinson notes (pp. 53–4) that 'Royal Navy concepts of discipline, service, and smartness were in many ways quite alien to the fishermen', and that 'Fishermen generally cared little for the niceties of uniform and traditional service discipline', but does not provide concrete evidence of how the two groups learned to co-exist as the war developed. Further, there is much potential within the subject for an examination both of the various roles played by civil society in the prosecution of a total war effort and of the manner by which industrial expertise was applied to the challenges of industrial warfare.

In this sense, the absence of introductory and concluding sections to each chapter is a real handicap for the book, as the wider context and significance of the material discussed within it is often buried – if not omitted altogether. As a result, Robinson's contention that the contribution Britain's fishermen 'made to the British maritime war effort was actually much wider and more fundamentally important than has previously been supposed' (p. 3) is not convincingly demonstrated by what follows. Instead, *Fishermen, the Fishing Industry and the Great War at Sea* provides a stable harbour from which further examinations of the topic could be launched.

CHRISTOPHER PHILLIPS  
Aberystwyth University, UK

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**Michael James Nugent, *A Long Week in March: The 36<sup>th</sup> (Ulster) Division in the German Spring Offensive, March 1918*. Warwick: Helion & Company, 2019. xviii + 272pp. ISBN 978-1921390571 (paperback). Price £19.95.**

The premise of Michael Nugent's *A Long Week in March* is that there is no comprehensive analysis of the experiences of the 36<sup>th</sup> (Ulster) Division in the week

leading up to the German spring offensive of March 1918 and the events of the offensive itself. Readers will wonder what it is that Cyril Falls' 1922 divisional history does, and Nugent points out that it is written from a 'strategic military point of view'. That need not have narrowed the scope of Falls' work, but it does suffer from the limitations inherent in many divisional histories written in the 1920s of focusing almost entirely on only the division in question, without offering much wider perspective. Beyond Falls, only Tom Johnstone's *Orange, Green and Khaki: The Story of the Irish Regiments in the Great War, 1914-18* (1992) has offered an overview of the division as a whole, and that is part of a very much wider study. Nugent rightly points out that various regimental or battalion level studies have focused only narrowly on parts of the division. However, he is not correct in his statement that there are no published accounts on either the Entrenching Battalions or the 16<sup>th</sup> Royal Irish Rifles. My own book, *Belfast Boys: How Unionists and Nationalists Fought and Died in the First World War* (2009) covered the former (if only briefly, making it a forgivable oversight). More substantially, Stuart N. White's *The Terrors: 16<sup>th</sup> (Pioneer) Battalion Royal Irish Rifles* (1996) includes several pages on the 16<sup>th</sup> Royal Irish Rifles' experience of the German attack.

However, regardless of these quibbles, Nugent has produced a very substantial and thorough narrative account of the Ulster Division's week facing the German offensive, usefully contextualised with wider politics and matters relating to reorganisation of the British army. The Ulster Division of March 1918 was very different to that which had left Belfast in May 1915, when it had been almost entirely Protestant and reflective of units of the Ulster Volunteer Force. By March 1918, disbandment of volunteer battalions and replenishment with regular ones contributed to the division containing as many as 4,000 Catholics.

As Nugent works through the events of the German offensive, he skilfully reconstructs a series of actions for which records are often far less coherent than those made during advances, simply due to the challenges of writing while on the move and under fire. Nugent has very effectively drawn together unit war diaries with personal recollections to produce a thoroughly comprehensive account of the division's activities, while also drawing out the cases of individuals as illustrative point. This is an account in which the individuality of soldiers is not lost in the broader story.

There might have been room in the book for comparisons between the Ulster Division and other British divisions during the offensive and indeed more widely in 1918, drawing on work by writers such as David Stevenson and general studies of the offensive which are cited by Nugent. He argues that 'the prevailing perception' of the Ulster Division's role during the offensive is of having suffered a defeat. To counteract that, Nugent points to many successes during the German attack, referencing Haig's 'Sixth Despatch' as recognising those. They included, for example, holding a redoubt

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at Fontaine-les-Clercs on 21<sup>st</sup> March. But how do such successes compare to the record of other divisions? If we are to understand the full extent of the Ulster Division's success or failure in March 1918, then that needs some attention.

Overall though, Nugent has produced a readable and engaging narrative which performs a great service to the division and those interested in its role in a relatively neglected aspect of its history. It will be especially valued by those with some family connection to the men who served. I had two great-uncles serving in the division in March 1918, one of whom, in the 15<sup>th</sup> Royal Irish Rifles, was taken prisoner. Nugent's highly commendable work will be an essential point of reference in seeking to reconstruct such individual stories.

RICHARD S. GRAYSON  
Goldsmiths, University of London, UK

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**Patrick Bishop, *Air Force Blue: The RAF in World War Two*. London: William Collins, 2017. xxi - 410pp. ISBN 978-0007433155 (paperback). Price £9.99.**

In his latest volume of a remarkable series of social histories of the Royal Air Force (RAF), Patrick Bishop has tackled the war conducted by the RAF as a whole rather than previous volumes which have concentrated on the exploits of Fighter Command or Bomber Command. As with his previous works, Bishop does not set out to demonstrate an overall argument or thesis, but instead he explores the social history through the eyes of some of those involved. The scope of the book is largely focused on the European theatre of the Second World War with the bomber offensive being one of the major areas to be explored. There are also chapters that look at peripheral theatres such as the campaign in Burma, the fighting of the Western Desert Air Force in North Africa and the oft-forgotten work of Coastal Command in the Battle of the Atlantic. The book further explores an under-researched area of the RAF's pre-war history, the social changes brought about by the expansion caused due to rearmament in the mid- to late-1930s. This was a fundamental sea-change for the RAF that, whilst more meritocratic in its selection of officers and men, still had a relatively rigid social structure that senior officers were keen to preserve.

Overall the scope of the book is a bottom-up approach to the RAF and the Second World War that places the thoughts and feelings of those conducting the strategy into greater focus. The personal and social side of the RAF is neatly interwoven with the

operational narrative that forms the framework to view how those involved in conducting the operations or repairing and re-arming the aircraft saw not only themselves and the role they were playing but how this did or did not affect how they saw their place within the wider context of the war itself. The book is also not limited to the experience of men. The voices of a selection of women can also be heard, with particular stand outs being those adjusting to military life and being able to forge a new and unexpected form of identity.

Those with an understanding of recent RAF and First World War historiography may find issue with some of the wider claims made in the book, such as that there was little co-operation in the British Empire in the 1920s and 1930s, and what little co-operation there was, was largely irrelevant and the comparisons of the RAF's bomber offensive to the attacks of the First World War. The fundamental research of the RAF's actions in the Second World War was largely based on the same, somewhat dated works, indicating that the author is not fully aware of some of the developments that have been made in our understanding of the reasoning behind the actions of the RAF during this conflict. This is certainly a book aimed at a general readership, although there are useful snippets of information for an academic audience. The one major failing of a work of this nature comes in the overwhelming use of eyewitness and first-hand accounts with little attempt to interrogate the sources used both for accuracy. This is not a direct criticism of this book, or any of a similar nature, but a healthy scepticism of sources of this nature that can be especially illuminating but require interrogation as comparison with other available sources of evidence. A book of this nature can only be strengthened by placing the experiences of those involved at the sharp end within the wider academic historical developments currently taking place. Whilst the focus on the major theatre of the RAF is understandable and is what the audience of this particular book would expect, a wider focus on different theatres would have added more colour and provided a greater depth of understanding of the pace of social change at different distances from London and if this distance had any effect on how the war was experienced. This is an engaging and enjoyable book that explores a newly developing area of historical research and should provide a platform for future study into how the Second World War was experienced by those involved at the sharp end of the fighting. It is a very welcome addition to the history of the RAF in both the inter-war and Second World War periods.

MATTHEW POWELL

Royal Air Force College, Cranwell, UK

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**John Kiszely, *Anatomy of a Campaign: The British Fiasco in Norway, 1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Notes. Bibliography. Index. 370pp. ISBN 978-1316646421 (paperback). Price £16.55.**

It is, perhaps, an interesting reflection on the nature of military history that this reader opened Kiszely's book expecting to find a new, but at the same time very traditional, assessment of the British campaign in Norway in 1940. That expectation was increased on reading that the author is a former senior officer in the British Army. It is to Kiszely's great credit that his book perfectly demonstrates the maxim that appearances and expectations can be highly deceptive. *Anatomy of a Campaign* is an extensive and deep inquiry into the reasons for the failure of the British intervention in Norway. It does not attempt to give a comprehensive account of the campaign and seeks to look beyond the obvious causes of failure which might be reduced down to 'poor strategy, intelligence blunders, German air superiority, the weak performance of the troops involved and serious errors of judgement by those responsible for the higher direction of the war' [p.viii.]. Instead, Kiszely wants to look at the deeper reasons for these problems: To the British way of war in the early part of the Second World War, and to the reasons why the decision makers took the decisions that they did. Kiszely's book is thus both an interesting fresh set of insights into the Norwegian campaign (overshadowed in popular memory and much of the writing about the Second World War by the German assault on the Low Countries and France), but also serves as an inquiry by case study into the higher political and military management of the British war effort.

Kiszely carefully charts the planning processes and structures by which the critical decisions on the Norway campaign were taken; the multiple layers through which the campaign was shaped from War Cabinet to the Military Coordination Committee and the Chiefs of Staff Committee. The picture which emerges is of a planning process into which structural delay, of fudged decisions and inter-departmental conflict was inbuilt and inevitable. Power to take vital action was not concentrated and checks rather than balances handicapped the speed at which Britain could wage war at the highest level. Britain was a country at war, but Whitehall still clung to much of the culture and practices of the pre-war period. Where reasonably possible, the risk of damage to private property was to be avoided in target planning for the early phases of the bombing campaign against Germany, and the Admiralty telephone switchboard closed down for the weekend at noon on Saturdays. In the War Office civil servants concluded departmental business at 17.00 hrs. prompt. For some, the war was a part time affair and gentlemanly standards were to be maintained come what may.

At the apex of the decision-making process stood a War Cabinet with ‘a very limited understanding of strategy’ [p.39.]. The image of Neville Chamberlain as a leader unable to provide strong leadership is confirmed and Kiszely charts the myriad rifts between ambitious ministers and service chiefs: between the glorious self-educated “expertise” of the politicians and the quieter professionalism of the service chiefs. In the Admiralty, the First Sea Lord, Dudley Pound busied himself in deflecting and defusing some of the more adventurous schemes of Winston Churchill. This was in preference to a more confrontational approach to the bold ideas on how to wage war by the civilian head of the department. Personal issues amplified the structural and cultural weaknesses in the senior management of the British war effort. Pound, for example, had perhaps been a less than stellar choice as First Sea Lord, and Churchill’s behaviour and thinking on Norway was conditioned by the disaster of the Dardanelles in 1915. Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Cyril Newall comes across as rather diffident and reserved, while the appointment in September 1939 of General Sir Edmund Ironside as a Chief of the Imperial General Staff, came as a surprise to a professional soldier who had little experience in the War Office. The tensions within the departments of government, and the tensions between the services, made for inertia and compromise in war planning which, in the case of the Norway campaign, would prove fatal.

Instead of a key move as part of a coordinated grand strategy the Norwegian campaign broke down into a series of separate air, sea, and land operations. Desperate improvisation was no substitute for sound planning. The ways in which compromised decisions and processes in Whitehall played out on the battlefield for British forces, despite some tactical success in theatre, is ably charted by the author who concludes with a wide-ranging assessment of the significance of the Norwegian campaign including the fall of Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister.

Kiszely’s book is ground breaking and of considerable value in understanding British war making in the early stages of the Second World War. It is also written in an engaging and open style that should ensure wide readership. The depth of research is evident, and the text is well supported with supporting material. *Anatomy of a Campaign: The British Fiasco in Norway, 1940* well deserves the plaudits which have been heaped upon it with, no doubt, more to come in the future.

G. H. BENNETT  
Plymouth University, UK

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**James Holland, *Normandy '44: D-Day and the Battle for France*. London: Penguin, 2019. 657pp. ISBN 978-1787631274 (hardback). Price £25.00.**

James Holland is among the leading historians specialising in the Second World war with a body of work already published to great critical acclaim including books on the Dambusters, Battle of Britain and the North Africa campaign, as well as Malta, and a three volume series on the War in the West, of which two have so far been published. A fellow of the Royal Historical Society, he is a regular presenter of his own television documentaries and a key part of recent commemorative events such as D-Day 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the RAF 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He also has written a series of novels and produces a weekly podcast.

For this new volume, the author has taken the trouble to 'walk the ground' which has given him a whole new perspective on an often well-worn narrative. Holland explores the strategic, operational and tactical aspects of the campaign, focussing on the sheer weight of force and the scale of the Allied forces which ultimately dominated the German forces. Rather than focus purely on D-Day itself, Holland has expanded his framework to include the battle for France. For even greater detail on D-Day itself the Peter Caddick-Adams, *Sand and Steel – A new history of D-Day*, would be a great companion. He also draws on a cast of eye-witness accounts from a wide variety of those involved including resistance fighters, foot soldiers, tank men, bomber crews, sailors and civilians for a truly 360-degree perspective on events.

The book itself is beautifully presented, beginning with a series of very interesting and useful maps which can be referred back to as you progress through the narrative, followed by descriptions of principal personalities and a portrait gallery. This is followed by a foreword where Holland sets out his reasons for writing the book and also the differences in approach that he has on this well-known campaign – principally that he will explore the operational level and the mechanics of war and re-insert this in to the framework of the higher level of command and those at the sharp end of battle which then produces an entirely new perspective – especially when combined with the already mentioned eye-witness accounts.

Progressing through a vividly written prologue, the narrative of the book is then split in to four sections. Beginning with "The Battle Before D-Day which covers the Atlantic Wall, Command of the Skies, Montgomery and the 'Master Plan' and Air Power, leading up to Part Two which covers the invasion itself. Holland manages to convey his obvious knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject with incisive analysis in an engrossing manner.

Part Three covers the attrition section of the campaign with vivid description of individual actions using eye-witness accounts maintaining the pace of the narrative effectively.

Part Four is entitled 'Breakout' and begins with a discourse on weapons where another myth of the campaign is squashed – that the Germans had technologically superior weapons.

A postscript follows and then a comprehensive glossary, appendices, notes, a timeline for both Normandy '44 and D-Day, sources and acknowledgements as well as a highly detailed index.

Holland certainly looks at the campaign in great detail but with a wider perspective which helps the overall understanding of the events and puts to bed many of the myths. He concludes that Montgomery in fact produced a plan about as good as it could be and was agreed as such by all concerned. He also points out the 'freedom of poverty' that the Germans had with the constrictions of numbers they had allowing comparatively easy co-ordination compared to the 'constraints of wealth' that the allied commanders had to deal with of much larger forces. The campaign strategy of the Germans is also explored as their methods were different to those the Allies experienced in North Africa and Italy following the orders of Hitler to 'stand and fight', even though a tactical retreat would in many, if not all cases, have produced a superior result. He also looks in detail and both air power and naval power as key factors in the campaign, again skilfully weaving in eye-witness accounts to illustrate the bigger picture.

This is an essential read for anyone interested in Second World War history and especially in D-Day and the campaign for France. The importance of 'walking the ground', meticulous personal research drawing on unseen archives and testimony from around the world, as well as eye-witness accounts produces a fully rounded picture and one that is written in an eminently readable manner. The author is to be congratulated on this fine piece of work.

STEVEN MARLEY  
Independent Scholar, UK

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**Iain Ballantyne, *Arnhem: Ten Days in the Cauldron*. London: Agora Books, 2019. 336pp. ISBN 978-19130099244 (paperback). Price £9.99**

There have been many accounts written on the Battle of Arnhem, that “glorious defeat” suffered by the British 1 Airborne Division in September 1944 during the Second World War. Best known might possibly be Cornelius Ryan’s *A Bridge Too Far*, which spawned the eponymously titled film starring Sean Connery and a host of others. Books by Maj Gen John Frost (who was there) and Anthony Beevor are also well known.

But where Iain Ballantyne’s book, published on the 75 anniversary of the ill-fated assault from the sky, differs is in the telling of the well-known saga not from the strategic perspective followed by other authors but through the testimonies of those who were at the coalface of the battle, soldiers and civilians alike. We hear the personal testimonies of people like Captain Peter Fletcher of the Glider Pilot Regiment, or 19 year-old Private Frank Newhouse, or the remarkable story of Dutch civilians Frans de Soet and Jan Loos, trapped in cellars in the middle of the fighting. This brings a refreshing immediacy to the tale.

Interestingly, the first chapter of Ballantyne’s book is nothing to do with Arnhem; it is an account of the famous *coup de main* operation which captured the two bridges across the River Orne and the Caen Canal on the night of 5/6 June 1944, the opening act of D Day. This remarkably audacious operation by D Company, 2 (Airborne) Battalion, the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, was known as Operation Deadstick and paved the way for British forces exiting Sword Beach on D Day.

Operation Market Garden, launched in September 1944 and of which the Battle of Arnhem was part, was a hundred times bigger than Deadstick and could hardly be described as a *coup de main* operation. What persuaded the normally cautious Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, commander of the 21 Army Group (2 British Army and 1 Canadian Army), to go for a highly risky and ambitious operation like Market Garden is beyond the general scope of this book, but go for it he did. Clearly, he was persuaded that it was a risk worth taking.

Britain’s 1 Airborne Division has only been used in its various constituent parts up to that date, not as a whole formation. It had been held in reserve whilst the 6 Airborne Division completed the Normandy landings. 1 Airborne had been stood up, and then stood down, for numerous operations – sometimes after they had boarded the

transports – and there was a genuine fear among commanders that the troops “might go off the boil”.

They need not have worried on that score. Despite the stop/start nature of their previous experiences, it's quite clear that the division was at the top of its game when it landed in Holland. Just as well, because it landed amongst elite Waffen SS troops who were recuperating there, having been mauled in the race across France that eventually followed D Day. As we all now know, the airborne soldiers were more than equal to their opponents but sadly wanting in heavy equipment, and that in the end is what decided the matter. The British XXX Corps couldn't get to them in time.

One constant theme in the book is the Division's poor or non-existent communications once they got on the ground – radios were either lost, not working, or incompatible. We learn from Major Tony Deane-Drummond, who at the tender age of 27 was second-in-command of Divisional communications, that they had more or less known that they would lose comms with the brigades when they left the Landing Zones. That's exactly what happened, so the Divisional Commander, Maj Gen Urquhart, felt compelled to leave his HQ in an attempt to find out what was happening on the ground.

Urquhart gets some criticism from the author for this, but the General was caught between a rock and a hard place. If he had stayed at his HQ, he would have had no idea how events were unfolding at brigade level, but by leaving to see for himself, his HQ could not contact him for decisions. However, Ballantyne labels his perambulations “a wild goose chase”.

At the other end of the rank scale we hear of 19 year-old Private Frank Newhouse of the 10 Parachute Battalion, part of their anti-tank platoon and a PIAT (Projector, Infantry, Anti-Tank) operator. Newhouse was called into action twice to stalk enemy tanks and succeeded in driving them off. The third time he was called upon things did not go so well; he was badly wounded by shrapnel and evacuated to the dressing station.

The book is pacey - and sometimes breath-taking - to read. A few maps help to orientate the reader to the action, although arguably for the younger and/or non-military reader, a larger scale map of the north west Europe strategic context might have been helpful too. There's also a useful glossary explaining military acronyms for the uninitiated and appendices looking at some aspects of the debacle in more detail.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed reading this account of the Arnhem battle, adding if you like a trench level perspective to those other accounts written from more senior, and sometimes more detached, point of view. Compulsory reading, of course, for past,

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present and future members of the Parachute Regiment and thoroughly recommended for military historians of all ages.

STUART CRAWFORD  
Independent Scholar, UK

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**Hans Schäufler (trans. Tony Le Tissier), *Panzers on the Vistula: Retreat and Rout in East Prussia 1945*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2018. 139pp. ISBN 978-1526734310 (hardback). Price £19.99.**

The rapid collapse of German defenses east of the Oder River in early 1945 stranded significant numbers of German soldiers and civilians behind the front. Communications officer Hans Schäufler's 4 Panzer Division, part of Army Group North, was trapped against the Baltic with diminishing hopes for escape and none of victory. Recounting the retreat from Latvia into East Prussia, *Panzers on the Vistula: Retreat and Rout in East Prussia 1945* relates a company-grade officer's attempts to keep his men and equipment together in spite of overwhelming odds.

Translated by historian Tony Le Tissier, the book is divided into eighteen chapters, plus a foreword, maps, and a timeline. The narrative largely focuses on combat between mid-January and war's end, with the three concluding chapters addressing the postwar fate of 4 Panzer Division's men as prisoners. Schäufler writes from a first-person perspective but does not provide context on his own background, including any previous combat in the East, an unfortunate omission.

In January 1945, the 4 Panzer Division was recouping in East Prussia after evacuation from the Courland Pocket. Hastily called into action, the division spent the following months fighting the Red Army in a losing series of battles in and around Danzig. Schäufler's depictions of the chaotic situation reveal the desperate actions of a weak rearguard force attempting to stop the near-inexorable advance of the Red Army. Schäufler's narrative of leading men in the absence of fire support or logistics is a powerful one. The emotional burdens of maintaining morale in the face of overwhelming odds are apparent in the text. His experiences urban combat in and around Danzig are particularly gripping. Under his leadership, the men of Schäufler's section continue to fight against overwhelming odds and at great personal cost though he claims to have known the war was lost much earlier.

Why, then, did Schäufler fight on when the war was lost in his mind? As he states: 'Why had we actually fought? Why had we had to put up with all of this? Why had so many splendid young men died? Why? Why? Why? Where was the sense?' (p. 105.)

The fate of fleeing refugees is frequently mentioned and discussed throughout the book as a primary motivation for 4th Panzer Army's stubborn resistance. Trapped along the beaches of Frische Nehrung, Schäufler states that 'behind our backs were tens of thousands of women and children waiting for ships to take them to safety...now the front here had to hold or bend and break' (87). The Soviet massacre at Nemmersdorf in October 1944 and other suspected massacres are listed as a further motivator for fighting on in defense of 'the rising stream of fleeing people, [4th Panzer Division wanted] to secure and protect their escape route and make their salvation possible' (p. 101).

Originally published in 1991 as *1945: Panzer an der Weichsel. Soldaten der letzten*, Le Tissier's translation leaves the original work largely unaltered. As a result, there are some errors and awkward translations in the text. For example, American B-29 Superfortresses, are supposedly responsible for the bombing of Danzig on 19 March 1945, when none flew in the European theater. Additionally, there are some awkward translations. For example the *Jagdtiger* tank destroyer is translated as 'Hunting-Tank IVs', part of Tank-Hunting Battalion 49, a mistake one would not expect because '*Jagdtiger*' is commonly used in English sources untranslated.

The omission of recent scholarship on war crimes and the myth of the honorable Wehrmacht is glaring, specifically in the book's closing chapters. Le Tissier allows Schäufler's apologetic voice to defend the Wehrmacht's conduct unchallenged throughout. Schäufler quotes the final dispatch from Admiral Dönitz:

'...almost six years of honourable struggle have come to an end...The German armed forces have finally honourably succumbed to immense superiority...Every soldier can uprightly and proudly lay down his arms...' (p. 117)

Indeed, the honorable Wehrmacht myth remains in the narrative despite multiple debunkings. After fighting ends, Schäufler encounters concentration camp survivors but states he only learned 'much, much later about all the inhumanity they had suffered' (p.111). Most audaciously, he claims their survival is, in part, because 4 Panzer Division 'enabled them to flee to the West' (p. 111). Such claims, and the continued propagation of the 'clean' Wehrmacht myth, should have been addressed by Le Tissier.

*Panzers on the Vistula* is a powerful tale of the chaos and fears experienced at the company-grade level at war's end in the East. Faced with overwhelming odds, Schäufler

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manages to keep his men together and fighting until ordered to surrender. His bottom-up view of the Wehrmacht's collapse is a valuable perspective in spite of its flaws. The book's narrow focus allows for in-depth understanding of the campaign in East Prussia as seen by one of its participants.

TIMOTHY HECK  
King's College London, UK

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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES (March 2020)

### **Articles**

The British Journal of Military History (the BJMH or Journal) welcomes the submission of articles on military history in the broadest sense, and without restriction as to period or region. The BJMH particularly welcomes articles on subjects that might not ordinarily receive much attention but which clearly show the topic has been properly researched.

Papers submitted to the BJMH must not have been published elsewhere.

The editors are happy to consider papers that are under consideration elsewhere on the condition that the author indicates to which other journals the article has been submitted.

Authors should submit their article manuscripts, including an abstract of no more than 100 words, as an MS Word or RTF file attached to an e-mail addressed to the BJMH Co-editors at [editor@bjmh.org.uk](mailto:editor@bjmh.org.uk).

Authors must provide appropriate contact details including your full mailing address.

The editors are keen to encourage article submissions from a variety of scholars and authors, regardless of their academic background. For those papers that demonstrate great promise and significant research but are offered by authors who have yet to publish, or who need further editorial support, the editors may be able to offer mentoring to ensure an article is successfully published within the Journal.

The BJMH is a 'double blind' peer-reviewed journal, that is, communication between reviewers and authors is anonymised and is managed by the Editorial Team. All papers that the editors consider appropriate for publication will be submitted to at least two suitably qualified reviewers, chosen by the editorial team, for comment. Subsequent publication is dependent on receiving satisfactory comments from reviewers. Authors will be sent copies of the peer reviewers' comments.

Following peer review and any necessary revision by the author, articles will be edited for publication in the Journal. The editors may propose further changes in the interest of clarity and economy of expression, although such changes will not be made without consultation with the author. The editors are the final arbiters of usage, grammar, and length.

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Authors should note that articles may be rejected if they do not conform to the Journal's Style Guide and/or they exceed the word count.

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Authors are encouraged to supply relevant artwork (maps, charts, line drawings, and photographs) with their essays. The author is responsible for citing the sources and obtaining permission to publish any copyrighted material.

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The BJMH seeks to publish concise, accessible and well-informed reviews of books relevant to the topics covered by the Journal. Reviews are published as a service to the readership of the BJMH and should be of use to a potential reader in deciding whether or not to buy or read that book. The range of books reviewed by the BJMH reflects the field of military history, taken in the widest sense. Books published by

academic publishers, general commercial publishers, and specialist military history imprints may all be considered for review in the Journal.

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The Journal's Editorial Team is responsible for commissioning book reviews and for approaching reviewers. From time to time a list of available books for review may be issued, together with an open call for potential reviewers to contact the Journal Editors. The policy of the BJMH is for reviews always to be solicited by the editors rather than for book authors to propose reviewers themselves. In all cases, once a reviewer has been matched with a book, the Editorial Team will arrange for them to be sent a review copy.

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**James Gow, *The Serbian Project and its Adversaries: a Strategy of War Crimes*. London: Hurst, 2003. xii + 322 pp. 1 map. ISBN 978-1850654995 (Paperback). Price £17.50.**

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The reviewer's name, and an institutional affiliation if relevant, should be appended at the bottom of the review, name in Capitals and Institution in lower case with both to be right aligned.

Reviews of a single work should not contain any footnotes, but if the text refers to any other works then their author, title and year should be apparent in order for readers to be able to identify them. The Editorial Team and Editorial Board may on occasion seek to commission longer Review Articles of a group of works, and these may contain footnotes with the same formatting and standards used for articles in the Journal.

## BJMH STYLE GUIDE (July 2019)

The BJMH Style Guide has been designed to encourage you to submit your work. It is based on the Chicago Manual of Style and more about this style can be found at:

<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

### Specific Points to Note

Use Gill Sans MT 10 Point for all article and book review submissions, including footnotes.

Text should be justified.

Paragraphs do not require indenting.

Line spacing should be single and a single carriage return applied between paragraphs.

Spellings should be anglicised: i.e. –ise endings where appropriate, colour etc., ‘got’ not ‘gotten’.

Verb past participles: –ed endings rather than –t endings are preferred for past participles of verbs i.e. learned, spoiled, burned. While is preferred to whilst.

Contractions should not be used i.e. ‘did not’ rather than ‘didn’t’.

Upon first reference the full name and title of an individual should be used as it was at the time of reference i.e. On 31 July 1917 Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF), launched the Third Battle of Ypres.

All acronyms should be spelled out in full upon first reference with the acronym in brackets, as shown in the example above.

Dates should be written in the form 20 June 2019.

When referring to an historical figure, e.g. King Charles, use that form, when referring to the king later on in the text, use king in lower case.

Foreign words or phrases such as *weltanschauung* or *levée en masse* should be italicised.

## BJMH STYLE GUIDE

### Footnoting:

- All references should be footnotes not endnotes.
- Footnote numeral should come at the end of the sentence and after the full stop.
- Multiple references in a single sentence or paragraph should be covered by a single footnote with the citations divided by semi-colons.

### Quotations:

- Short (less than three lines of continuous quotation): placed in single quotation marks unless referring to direct speech and contained within that paragraph. Standard footnote at end of sentence.
- Long (more than three lines of continuous quotation): No quotation marks of any kind. One carriage space top and bottom, indented, no change in font size, standard footnote at end of passage.
- Punctuation leading into quotations is only necessary if the punctuation itself would have been required were the quotation not there. i.e. : ; and , should only be present if they were required to begin with.
- Full stops are acceptable inside or outside of quotation marks depending upon whether the quoted sentence ended in a full stop in the original work.

### Citations:

- For books: Author, *Title in Italics*, (place of publication: publisher, year of publication), p. # or pp. #-#.
- For journals: Author, 'Title in quotation marks', *Journal Title in Italics*, Vol. #, Iss. # (or No.#), (Season/Month, Year) pp. #-# (p. #).
- For edited volumes: Chapter Author, 'Chapter title' in Volume Author/s (ed. or eds), *Volume title in italics*, (place of publication: publisher, year), p. # or pp. #-#.
- Primary sources: Archive name (Archive acronym), Catalogue number of equivalent, 'source name or description' in italics if publicly published, p. #/date or equivalent. Subsequent references to the same archive do not require the Archive name.
- Internet sources: Author, 'title', URL (with date accessed) The time accessed may also be included, but is not generally required, but, if used, then usage must be consistent throughout
- *Op cit.* should be shunned in favour of shortened citations.
- Shortened citations should include Author surname, shortened title, p.# for books. As long as a similar practice is used for journals etc., and is done consistently, it will be acceptable.
- *Ibid.*, with a full stop before the comma, should be used for consecutive citations.

Examples of Citations:

- Michael Howard, *War in European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 21.
- Michael Collins, 'A fear of flying: diagnosing traumatic neurosis among British aviators of the Great War', *First World War Studies*, 6, 2 (2015), pp. 187-202 (p. 190).
- Michael Howard, 'Men against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914', in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), pp. 510-526.
- The UK National Archives (TNA), CAB 19/33, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Sclater, evidence to Dardanelles Commission, 1917.
- Shilpa Ganatra, 'How Derry Girls Became an Instant Sitcom Classic', *The Guardian*, 13 February 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2018/feb/13/derry-girls-instant-sitcom-classic-schoolgirls-northern-ireland>. Accessed 1 January 2019.

**Note: Articles not using the citation style shown above will be returned to the author for correction prior to peer review.**