



NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

**IRISHMEN IN THE BRITISH SERVICE
DURING THE FRENCH
REVOLUTIONARY WARS, 1793-1802**

by

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DEDICATION

To Aideen.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.D.M.	Admiralty Records
Adj. Gen.	Adjutant-general
Col.	Colonel
Col. Cmmdt.	Colonel-commandant
<i>E.H.R.</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>Hist. Jn.</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
H.O.	Home Office Records
K.P.	Kilmainham Papers
Lt. Col.	Lieutenant-colonel
Maj.	Major
Maj. Gen.	Major-general
N.A.I.	National Archives of Ireland, Dublin
N.L.I.	National Library of Ireland, Dublin
P.R.O.	Public Records Office (now the National Archives, Kew)
S.H.D.	Service historique de la Défense, Paris
S.O.C.	State of the Country Papers
T.N.A.	The National Archives, Kew, London
W.O.	War Office Records

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INTRODUCTION

THE FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WARS: CHANGES IN WARFARE

The French Revolutionary wars had their origins in changing political and social attitudes during the eighteenth century.¹ The Age of Enlightenment, with its ideas of citizenship, human rights and republicanism,² inspired reformers to adopt radical approaches to politics and this in turn gave rise to the Age of Revolution. The notion of the common people challenging the authority of absolute monarchy became reality, the most prominent example being the French Revolution.³ Other European nations, fearing a spread of French power and revolutionary ideals, declared war on France, thus beginning a period of warfare that would last for over twenty years. Revolutionary France declared war on Great Britain in February 1793, drawing Britain into a conflict that marked a major turning point in military history.

The French Revolutionary wars witnessed an increase in the intensity of warfare, as the French government raised larger armies than had ever been seen before to conquer new territories and resist invasion.⁴ This in turn forced the European powers that opposed France to also raise larger armies and navies, resulting in the militarisation of society. Growing urban populations provided large numbers to both revolutionary movements and armies.⁵ As Esdaile notes, the concept of a 'nation in arms' emerged during the 1790s, with European armies gradually evolving from small bodies of professionals and hired mercenaries to large

¹ J. M. Anderson, *Daily life during the French Revolution* (Westport, CT, 2007), p. 7.

² John Sweetman, *The Enlightenment and the Age of Revolution: 1700-1850* (London, 1998), p. 2; Anderson, *Daily life during the French Revolution*, p. 5.

³ Mark Philp, 'Enlightenment, republicanism and radicalism' in Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter Jones, Christa Knellwolf and Iain McCalman (eds), *The Enlightenment world* (Oxford, 2004), pp 457-72, at p. 457.

⁴ Anderson, *Daily life during the French Revolution*, pp 205-7.

⁵ Owen Connelly, *The wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon: 1792-1815* (New York, 2006), p. 217.

standing forces composed of citizen soldiers.⁶ The ‘unbridled militarism’ of France (subsequently personified by Napoleon Bonaparte in later years), proved a serious challenge to the stability of Europe.⁷ While the wars were not ‘world wars’ in the modern sense, they involved conflict across much of the world, and although it would take the advent of industrialisation to fully realise the concept of ‘total war’, the competing European nations became militarised during these wars as far as logistics and the technology of the time would permit.⁸ This eighteenth-century militarisation had a significant effect on the population of Europe, particularly on those men called upon to join these new armies.

The wars arose from an inevitable conflict between the *ancien régime* and the new national identities emerging in Europe during the latter half of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. France provided the most dramatic example, with revolutionaries overthrowing an unpopular monarchy and replacing it with a republican fatherland, *la patrie*. Frenchmen fought for their republic and later their emperor while British soldiers fought to defend the British Empire and defeat the spread of revolutionary ideas. Revolutionaries in Holland emulated the French by establishing the Batavian Republic in place of the older Dutch Republic. Further afield, the inhabitants of European colonies sought to gain independence from their rulers, such as the American colonists from Great Britain, the Haitian slaves from the French, or the people of Latin America from Spain.

As a sister-kingdom and, simultaneously, a possession of Britain at this time, Ireland played a role that has often been overlooked both in studies of the wider wars and in Irish historical scholarship. The rise of Irish radical nationalism, the failed insurrection of 1798 and the subsequent merging of the British and Irish parliaments in the Act of Union have been subjects of considerable study. However, a larger proportion of Irish people fought for Great Britain in her armed forces during this period than rebelled against British rule.

⁶ Charles Esdaile, *Napoleon's wars: an international history, 1803-1815* (London, 2007), pp 6-9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 564.

⁸ Jeremy Black, *War in the nineteenth century: 1800-1914* (Cambridge, 2009), pp 6-9.

Bartlett estimates that between 1793 and 1815 one in five Irishmen saw armed service for the British crown.⁹ In 1783, at the end of the American Revolution, Irish recruits represented 4.4% of the army, and this increased to about 33.3% during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars.¹⁰ Many Irishmen also served in the Royal Navy, both as officers and sailors, and in the Royal Marine. As Irish sailors did not remain in Ireland after enlistment, apart from patrolling the coast, and there were no ‘Irish’ ships in the way that there were ‘Irish’ regiments, the main focus of this thesis will be those Irish regiments that were raised in Ireland, both for the regular army and also the amateur military forces established to defend against invasion and insurgency, from Catholic Franco-Irish émigrés to Protestant gentry officers.

POLITICS, MILITARY AND SOCIETY IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY IRELAND

While the aim of this thesis is to explore the often overlooked experiences of Irish soldiers in the British service, and assess how Irish identity developed within the British service, it is imperative to also contextualise them within the religious, social, economic and political contexts in Ireland, Britain and Europe at this time. Ireland in the eighteenth-century was, as S. J. Connolly describes it, a ‘divided kingdom.’¹¹ Eighteenth-century Britain was divided along class lines, the wealth and power of the upper class securing its position in society over the general population. Religious tensions did exist, as seen in the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots in 1780,¹² but the majority of the population, whether rulers or ruled, were members of the Church of England, with smaller numbers of Catholics, Quakers, Methodists and Presbyterians. In Ireland the ruling class, the Ascendancy, were almost exclusively

⁹ Thomas Bartlett, ‘Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion: Ireland, 1793-1803’ in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1997), pp 247-93, at p. 247.

¹⁰ Saul David, *All the King’s men: the British soldier from the Restoration to Waterloo* (London, 2012), p. 367.

¹¹ S. J. Connolly, *Divided kingdom: Ireland 1630-1800* (Oxford, 2008).

¹² Jim Herlihy, *The Royal Irish Constabulary* (Dublin, 1997), p. 26.

Protestants of the Church of Ireland, while the majority of the population were Catholic; as such Irish society was deeply divided along religious, social, economic and political lines that did not exist to such an extent in Britain, resulting in multiple Irish identities, rather than a single, unified national identity.

Therefore, this chapter will explore the literature relating to the highly influential social structure of Ireland in the latter half of the eighteenth century, along with the intrinsically linked political, military and economic aspects of Irish history, in order to highlight salient features of the prevailing political, social, economic and denominational order that are relevant to interpreting the experiences of Irishmen in the British service during the turbulent years of the late eighteenth century. This thesis will examine the ‘Catholic Question’, the debate on how to handle Irish Catholics, in relation to Irishmen in the British service. It will also take into account other factors, such as Protestant Ascendancy identity, that influenced the experiences of Irishmen in the British service. The following sections will examine the position of the Protestant Ascendancy minority in society during the eighteenth century, highlighting their role in political, military and economic life, before exploring the corresponding Catholic majority, and their position in political, military and economic life.

THE PROTESTANT ASCENDANCY IN IRISH SOCIETY

Despite representing a minority of the population, the Ascendancy dominated Ireland in the aftermath of the Protestant victory in the Williamite Wars of the late seventeenth-century. The penal laws that followed restricted the rights of Catholics who subsequently only owned about one seventh of the land; inheritance was strictly controlled, and most lived as tenants of Protestant landlords.¹³ This section will show how the Ascendancy influenced life in

¹³ James Lydon, *The making of Ireland, from ancient times to the present* (London, 1998), p. 217.

eighteenth-century Ireland, and how this impacted Irishmen in the British service during the 1790s.

The question of Ascendancy identity has divided scholars. J. A. Froude, writing in the nineteenth century, claimed that any improvements that Ireland experienced under Ascendancy rule only came about thanks to those among the Ascendancy who ‘retained their English character ... and acted on English principles.’¹⁴ Foster has described how the Ascendancy saw themselves as ‘Irishmen with English civil rights,’¹⁵ while McCracken likewise viewed their society as very Anglo-centric.¹⁶ Bartlett challenges the notion that the Anglo-Irish came to view their adopted country in quite positive terms and emphasises that Ireland avoided being described as a colony of Britain.¹⁷ Johnson-Liik argues that the Irish M.P.s wished to be seen as equals to their fellow M.P.s in Westminster.¹⁸ This dual nature of Ascendancy identity will be examined further in this thesis, assessing in particular how it affected the Ascendancy officers, as well as the ordinary Irishmen, who enlisted in the British service.

The role of the Ascendancy in Irish political and economic life

The political structure in eighteenth-century Ireland was presided over by the Lord Lieutenant and his executive council, and it is noteworthy that, prior to Viscount Castlereagh’s appointment as Chief Secretary in 1798, all chief office-holders were Englishmen appointed by Westminster. This indicates that the British government did not trust the Ascendancy with executive power, and reflects underlying tensions between Westminster and Dublin. However, the Ascendancy were able to exert their power in the

¹⁴ J. A. Froude, *The English in Ireland in the eighteenth century* (3 vols, London, 1872-4), ii, 191.

¹⁵ R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1988), p. 248.

¹⁶ J. L. McCracken, ‘Ch. II: The social structure and social life, 1714-60’ in T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan (eds), *A new history of Ireland: vol. IV Eighteenth century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford, 1986), pp 31-56, at p. 35.

¹⁷ Thomas Bartlett, ‘“A people made rather for copies than originals”: the Anglo-Irish, 1760-1800’ in *The International History Review*, xii, no. 1 (1990), pp 11-25, at pp 12-14.

¹⁸ E. M. Johnson-Liik, *History of the Irish parliament: 1692-1800* (6 vols, Belfast, 2002), i, 41.

Irish parliament and political decisions made in both Westminster and Dublin had direct consequences for those Irishmen serving in the British armed forces: as such, the Ascendancy are therefore an important consideration in this thesis.

During the eighteenth century, British and Irish politicians were identified as either Whigs or Tories, though Mitchel argues that there was often little difference between the two.¹⁹ Blackstock claims that Irish politicians, who were all Protestant, saw Ireland as a 'sister' kingdom to Britain, rather than as occupying an inferior position.²⁰ The power and influence of individual members of the Ascendancy varied, however; Liik describes Irish politics as 'dominated by family groups whose relationship with the current administration fluctuated'. The political affiliations of commanding officers will be further explored in case studies in this thesis, examining how these political leanings could influence the experiences of the men in their regiments.²¹

During the eighteenth century the Irish parliament occasionally found itself at odds with its Westminster counterpart. In the 1770s the Patriot political movement arose, which Leersen argues could be considered a form of early Protestant nationalism.²² McBride describes this Irish Patriotism as very much Anglo-centric, rather than favouring any older, Gaelic aspect.²³ He stresses the importance of the Protestant belief that 'civility signified the language, learning, customs and common law of their mother country.'²⁴ However, it must also be remembered that the wish for 'self-management' was not uniquely Irish, with similar desires being articulated in the West Indies and the American colonies.²⁵ In an effort to

¹⁹ Leslie Mitchel, *The Whig world 1760-1837* (London, 2005), p. 2.

²⁰ Allan Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army: the Irish Yeomanry, 1796-1834* (Dublin, 1998), p. 22.

²¹ Johnson-Liik, *History of the Irish parliament*, i, 37-8.

²² J. T. Leersen, 'Anglo-Irish Patriotism and its European context: notes towards a reassessment' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland/ Iris an dá chultúr*, iii (1988), pp 7-24, at p. 7; Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 248.

²³ Ian McBride, 'The common name of Irishman': Protestantism and patriotism in eighteenth-century Ireland' in Tony Claydon and Ian McBride (eds), *Protestantism and national identity* (Cambridge, 1998), pp 236-61, at p. 237.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p.240.

²⁵ Johnson-Liik, *History of the Irish parliament*, i, 38.

ensure Irish loyalty during the American War of Independence, concessions were granted to the Irish parliament and restrictions on Irish trade were abolished.²⁶ This was thanks in part to the Volunteer movement, which had held military demonstrations in favour of these reforms.²⁷ This militarisation would be repeated, but on a greater scale, during the French Revolutionary wars and its impacts will be seen in different ways in all of the case studies in this thesis.

Froude, writing during the period of the Home Rule movement, describes the Irish parliament as ‘the arena for the partition of the spoils’, indicating his disdain for the parliament and the Ascendancy.²⁸ In Beckett’s view, Froude’s work argues that Ireland needed strong external government, both during the eighteenth century and also at the time of the study’s publication in the 1870s.²⁹ It is clear that Froude’s work lies at the extreme of subjectivity, loaded with a political objective.

Froude’s disapproval was echoed by Lecky, another nineteenth-century historian, yet in not quite as harsh terms as the former.³⁰ Foster suggests that Lecky’s work was a response to Froude’s, refuting the latter’s distortions and exaggeration for fear that Froude’s treatment of the native Irish in his work would help the case for Irish nationalists seeking Home Rule, at the time of the work’s publication.³¹ Froude and Lecky may have been dismissive of the Ascendancy, but this thesis will reassess this view in relation to the Ascendancy and military service, particularly in their role in the defence of Ireland in the 1790s.

²⁶ For more on these concessions see James Kelly, *Poyning’s Law and the making of law in Ireland* (Dublin, 2007).

²⁷ For more on the Irish Volunteers, see Chapters 4 and 5.

²⁸ Froude, *The English in Ireland*, ii, 189.

²⁹ J. C. Beckett, ‘Eighteenth-century Ireland,’ in T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan (eds), *A new history of Ireland: vol. IV Eighteenth century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford, 1986), xxxix-xliii, at xlii-xliii.

³⁰ W. E. H. Lecky, *History of Ireland in the eighteenth century* (5 vols, London, 1898-1913), i, 282.

³¹ R. F., Foster, ‘History and the Irish Question’ in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, xxxiii (1983), pp 169-92, at p. 179.

McCracken warns against simply portraying Irish history as a struggle between Protestants of the Church of Ireland and Roman Catholics, highlighting other groups such as Presbyterians or Quakers, or the ‘English baronies’ of Wexford, descendants of Anglo-Norman settlers who were very anti-Irish, yet also disliked the English and were ‘fervent’ Catholics.³² The rights of other non-Anglican religious denominations, known as Dissenters, were also limited, though to a lesser extent than in the case of Catholics.³³ The most numerous of these Dissenters were the Presbyterians. Located mostly in Ulster, the majority were members of the tenant and merchant class, rather than of the gentry.³⁴ The British government were less harsh in their treatment of this group as they feared the unity that the Presbyterians displayed, and in 1780 Presbyterians were granted more freedom to serve in civil positions like urban councils.³⁵ Yet this fear of their unity was ungrounded, as Presbyterians (as a whole) remained loyal during the French Revolutionary wars.³⁶ However, these various religious groups were very decidedly in the minority when compared to the Catholic majority and the smaller, but powerful, Church of Ireland branch of Protestantism, and they did not impact the experiences of Irishmen in the British service in the same way.

As a minority group, Irish Protestants strongly favoured organisations and clubs that upheld their faith and traditions. In late 1795 and early 1796 the Orange Order was established to promote loyalty amongst the Protestant population, but it did not gain official support from the government or military, who saw it as a potential threat to unit discipline. Instead, it grew in small groups, especially amongst the amateur defence forces in Ulster. Freemason clubs also became very popular in Ireland in the eighteenth century, and were a place where Protestant and Catholic alike could mix freely. Mirala also draws attention to

³² McCracken, ‘The social structure and social life’, p. 53.

³³ Jim Smyth, ‘Like amphibious animals’: Irish Protestants, Ancient Britons, 1691-1707’ in *Hist. Jn.*, xxxvi, no. 4 (1993), pp 785-97, at p. 786.

³⁴ McCracken, ‘The social structure and social life’, p. 40.

³⁵ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 214.

³⁶ Lydon, *The making of Ireland*, pp 227-8.

unofficial ‘hedgemasons’, who were not affiliated with the Grand Lodge of Ireland, and who developed connections not only with the Orange Order but also with groups such as the pro-Catholic Defenders, groups which he classes as ‘paramilitary fraternities.’³⁷ There had also been overlap in membership between Freemasons and the Volunteers, such as the First Free Mason Corps of Volunteers, formed in Tyrone in 1782.³⁸ Freemasonry was not unique to Britain and Ireland of course; each regiment of the old Irish Brigade in the French service had its own lodge.³⁹ This enthusiasm for clubs and societies would be reflected in the later enthusiasm for amateur defence formations, and will be seen in case studies examining the militia, yeomanry and fencibles.

While Irish society was perhaps more diverse than is often recognised, it is clear that the Protestant minority was very much in control. Hill emphasises that Protestant Patriotism valued concepts such as ‘the ancient constitution, civic republicanism and conquest theory.’⁴⁰ Hayton argues that religion played a major role in how politics and reform developed in the eighteenth-century, and that ‘political loyalty was indistinguishable from allegiance to the established church.’⁴¹ The Ascendancy’s domination of the economy rested on their control of the land, of government and of taxes. Andrews argues that the Ascendancy were very keen to model their lands on the English style, spending large amounts of money to prove that Ireland was now a peaceful country.⁴² This highlights what may be a dual identity of the Ascendancy, both looking to England for inspiration yet keen to demonstrate their own abilities. This desire to prove their importance may be seen in the case

³⁷ Petri Mirala, *Freemasonry in Ulster, 1733-1813* (Dublin, 2007), p. 148.

³⁸ Pdraig Higgins, *A nation of politicians: gender, patriotism and political culture in late eighteenth Ireland* (Wisconsin, 2010), p. 10.

³⁹ George Martinez, ‘Semper et ubique fidelis’ in Nathalie Genet-Rouffiac and David Murphy (eds), *Franco-Irish military connections, 1590-1945* (Dublin, 2009), pp 139-49, at p.148.

⁴⁰ Jacqueline Hill, *From patriots to unionists: Dublin civic politics and Irish Protestant Patriotism* (Oxford, 1997), p. 7.

⁴¹ D. W. Hayton, ‘Parliament and the established church’ in D. W. Hayton, James Kelly and John Bergin (eds), *The eighteenth-century composite state: representative institutions in Ireland and Europe, 1688-1800* (Basingstoke, 2010), pp 78-106, at p. 80.

⁴² J. H. Andrews, ‘Land and people, c. 1780’ in Moody and Vaughan, *A new history of Ireland: vol. IV Eighteenth century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford, 1986), pp 236-64, at p. 237.

studies featured in this thesis, as commanders (who were often also M.P.s) spent large amounts of money raising and equipping their regiments, as demonstrations of both loyalty and ability.

The role of the Ascendancy in military life

The Ascendancy also dominated the military sphere of eighteenth-century Ireland. The garrison, also known as the Irish Establishment, was under the authority of the Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in Ireland, based at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham and was theoretically independent of the Commander-in-Chief of the forces, based at Horse Guards London, instead reporting to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.⁴³ However, the commanders did not always agree with the Lord Lieutenant on military matters and this led to a power struggle between the office holders in Kilmainham and Dublin Castle, with some military units such as the yeomanry and militia coming under the remit of Dublin Castle while others such as the Irish Brigade or fencibles took their orders from Kilmainham.

At the beginning of the eighteenth-century the Irish Establishment numbered 12,000 men, augmented to 15,235 in 1769. Catholics were officially not permitted to enlist but Cookson emphasises that in reality many Catholics still enlisted in the army, but did so without mentioning their religion, to avoid discrimination.⁴⁴ The army was preoccupied with keeping the peace prior to the outbreak of war in 1793, leading McCracken to describe it as an important 'prop' to the Ascendancy in the eighteenth-century.⁴⁵ This military support for the Ascendancy will be examined in a number of case studies, in particular in the chapters on the yeomanry and Irish fencibles, both of which formations closely linked with the

⁴³ I. F. Nelson, *The Irish militia 1793-1803: Ireland's forgotten army* (Dublin, 2007), p. 30.

⁴⁴ J. E. Cookson, *The British armed nation 1793-1815* (Oxford, 1997), p. 153

⁴⁵ J. L. McCracken, 'The political structure, 1714-60' in Moody and Vaughan, *A new history of Ireland: vol. IV Eighteenth century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford, 1986), pp 57-83, at p. 82.

Ascendancy identity.⁴⁶

That identity could have a significant impact on the experiences of Irish soldiers through the aegis of their commanding officers, who were predominantly Protestant and who saw political and military activities as a way to improve their social status. Furthermore, in some cases, there was a strong family tradition of military service.⁴⁷ McBride argues that Protestantism had just as much potential to divide, as it did to unite, and this may be seen in eighteenth century Ireland.⁴⁸ The impact of religious divisions on the experiences of Irishmen serving in the British army will be investigated through case studies, particularly of the Catholic Irish Brigade, whose Catholic and Franco-Irish identity stirred the distrust of their Protestant countrymen.

THE 'CATHOLIC QUESTION' AND IRISH SOCIETY

The position of Catholics in Irish society

An important characteristic of eighteenth-century Ireland was that it was a mostly poor Catholic country. Yet, as Barnard points out, the Catholic majority receives little attention in the literature, with both Lecky and more recent scholarship such as *A new history of Ireland* focusing instead on the elite and Protestants, who were often one and the same.⁴⁹ Froude and Lecky portray Irish Catholics at this time as decidedly oppressed and abject, a view that some modern historians, have reiterated. Beckett describes the Catholics of eighteenth-

⁴⁶ For a full return of the effective strength of the British military in Ireland from 1793-1802, see Appendix 1.

⁴⁷ Peter Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army, 1792-1922: suborned or subordinate?' in *Journal of Social History*, xvii, no. 1 (1983), pp 31-64, at pp 35-6.

⁴⁸ McBride, 'Protestantism and patriotism', p. 260.

⁴⁹ T. C. Barnard, 'Farewell to old Ireland' in *Hist. Jn.*, xxxvi, no. 4 (1993), pp 909-28, at p. 912.

century Ireland as ‘broken and helpless,’⁵⁰ while J. G. Simms portrays the Catholics as suffering in a state of ‘powerless subordination.’⁵¹

However, more recent research has challenged this view. Trade and agriculture were two areas still open to Catholics; Hill emphasises that Catholics were still allowed to participate in certain trades, such as commerce and medicine,⁵² while Blackstock points out that some Catholics remained in positions of power, as large farmers who became locally important as agriculture improved, or as businessmen.⁵³ There was also a ‘semi-gentry’, consisting of Catholic noblemen and gentry who managed to retain their lands in the aftermath of the Williamite victory and introduction of the penal laws.⁵⁴ Some of these Catholic gentry and noblemen will be examined in the case studies, as they raised regiments to defend Ireland and demonstrate their loyalty to government. McDowell points to the fact that the Catholic Committee, the group that lobbied for Catholic relief, included wealthy Dublin businessmen.⁵⁵ Whelan describes the Catholic middlemen, who often handled the affairs of the Protestant landlords, as a sort of ‘underground gentry’ that formed in many areas the apex of the Catholic social and economic structure.⁵⁶ This growth in wealth and status amongst Irish Catholics, and the general emergence of a middle class, will be examined in the case studies which follow.

The emergence of a Catholic middle class paved the way for further Catholic relief, as these men, led by members of the gentry such as Lord Fingall, sought improvements for

⁵⁰ Beckett, ‘Eighteenth-century Ireland’, xl.

⁵¹ J. G. Simms, ‘The establishment of the Protestant Ascendancy, 1691-1714’ in Moody and Vaughan (eds), *A new history of Ireland: vol. IV Eighteenth century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford, 1986), pp 1-30, at p. 1.

⁵² Jacqueline Hill, ‘Convergence and Conflict in Eighteenth-Century Ireland’ in *Hist. Jn.*, xliv, no. 4 (2001), pp 1039-63, at p. 1041.

⁵³ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 25.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ R. B McDowell., ‘The age of the United Irishmen: reform and reaction, 1789-94.’ in Moody and Vaughan (eds), *A new history of Ireland: vol. IV Eighteenth century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford, 1986), pp 289-338, at p. 303.

⁵⁶ Kevin Whelan, ‘An underground gentry? Catholic middlemen in eighteenth-Century Ireland’ in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, x (1995), pp 7-68, at p. 13.

their co-religionists. McBride emphasises that ‘sympathetic Protestants’ such as Edmund Burke’ sometimes wrote for the Catholic Committee, the lobby group for reformed rights for Catholics, indicating the wider level of support for the Catholic cause.⁵⁷ Anti-Catholicism was not also as widespread as earlier historians have claimed; McBride stresses that during the American War of Independence the concept of a united defence of Ireland, headed by the Ascendancy but including the Catholic majority, was ‘carefully fostered.’⁵⁸ He also argues that following the French Revolution, Catholics were perceived as being potentially able to escape the sway of the Vatican.⁵⁹ Varying attitudes towards Pitt’s Irish Brigade, as will be seen in the first case study, reflect these changing views on Catholics.

Hill also challenges the previously assumed anti-Catholicism and stresses that ‘Roman Catholic’ did not automatically mean ‘papist’ in the eighteenth century and that Protestants did not consider all Irish people to be papists.⁶⁰ ‘Papists’ were looked upon with disdain and suspicion due to their perceived unreliability and their being potentially influenced too much by the Vatican. However, as Hill suggests, there existed a type of Catholic that was seen as acceptable to the Ascendancy, one that potentially deserved a degree of emancipation.⁶¹ This contrast between the acceptable Roman Catholic and the mistrusted ‘papist’ will be examined further in this thesis, and in particular in relation to the Catholic Irish Brigade.

The position of Catholics in Irish society will feature significantly in some of the case studies in this thesis. Blackstock claims that if the Catholic population had mostly converted to Protestantism, the Ascendancy would have lost their elite status in society, combined with their monopoly on owning land.⁶² Yet this overlooks the fact that religion

⁵⁷ McBride, ‘Protestantism and patriotism’, p. 252.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 254.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 260.

⁶⁰ Jacqueline Hill, ‘National festivals, the state and ‘Protestant Ascendancy’ in Ireland, 1790-1829’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxiv, no. 93 (1984), pp 30-51, at p. 38.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 25.

was not the sole explanatory factor of the Ascendancy's power; they owed their dominance to their wealth and the support of their English allies, rather than their specific religious beliefs. If the entire population of Ireland had converted to Protestantism, there would still have been significant differences in wealth and power between the land-owning upper class and the general population, including the emerging Catholic middle class. Theoretically, converting to Protestantism opened more routes for advancement in society; in practice, a lack of substantial wealth and the Ascendancy's desire to maintain the *status quo* would have been likely to inhibit advancement for many new converts. Therefore, while the extent to which Catholics could advance in society was limited, their position was not always as abject as Froude and Lecky would have us believe.

The economic hardship experienced by many of the Catholic majority, combined with traditionalist attitudes, resulted in growing social unrest in late eighteenth-century Ireland. Oxley states that while commercialising agriculture represented the south and east, and manufacturing was emerging in the north, the west was still mainly composed of poor farming communities.⁶³ Goldstrom and Clarkson claim that the Irish Catholic peasant majority were 'indifferent' to agricultural improvement, due to the absentee nature of their landlords, their impoverished and conservative nature, and the subdivision of the land which resulted in small farms that were unsuitable to widespread modernisation.⁶⁴ However, there were Ascendancy landlords who were of an 'improving class', that were more open to agricultural improvement. One such gentleman was William Burton Conyngham, colonel of the Donegal Militia, whose case is examined in the second case study. This tension between the traditionalist Catholic majority and the 'improving' Protestant minority contributed to the destabilisation of Irish society, and necessitated the growing use of the military to enforce control in rural areas, a duty that will feature in more detail in the case studies.

⁶³ Deborah Oxley, 'Living standards of women in Prefamine Ireland' in *Social Science History*, xxviii, no. 2 (2004), pp 271-95, at p. 271.

⁶⁴ J. M. Goldstrom and L. A. Clarkson (eds), *Irish population, economy, and society: essays in honour of the late K. H. Connell* (Oxford, 1981), p. 29.

As a result of the penal laws, many Irish Catholic soldiers emigrated to enlist in the Catholic armies of France and Spain, establishing the ‘Wild Geese’ tradition. This military emigration was closely linked to the Jacobite cause that supported James II and his descendants in their ambitions for the throne of Britain and Ireland, during the first half of the eighteenth century. However, as the century progressed fears of another Catholic revolt abated, the rights and social standing of Catholics improved, and emigration decreased. Catholic Relief (the campaign to reverse the penal laws) features strongly in the literature on late eighteenth-century Ireland even though the greater emphasis in the wider scholarship is usually on the later emancipation campaign orchestrated by Daniel O’Connell.⁶⁵ Indeed, Bartlett claims that Irish history from 1550 onwards may be seen as an extended comment on the ‘Catholic Question’.⁶⁶ This thesis will therefore examine how the ‘Catholic Question’ affected the experiences of Irishmen in the British service, and gauge whether their experiences reflect the wider development of the ‘Catholic Question’ in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Ireland.

The ‘Catholic Question’ in politics and military life

The penal laws affected many aspects of Irish Catholics’ lives and the military sphere was no exception. While officially banned from enlisting, many Catholics continued to enlist throughout the 1700s. Denman argues that as most trade and manufacture was carried out by the Protestant population, large-scale recruitment of Protestants alone would have damaged the Irish economy.⁶⁷ Denman, like Cookson, claims that restrictions on Catholic recruitment had been ‘quietly’ dropped in 1762, with commanders often deciding not to inquire into the

⁶⁵ Arthur Houston, *Daniel O’Connell: his early life, and journal, 1795 to 1802* (London, 1906); M. R. O’Connell, ‘O’Connell reconsidered’ in *Studies: an Irish quarterly review*, lxiv, no. 254 (1975), pp 107-19; Mary Robinson, ‘Daniel O’Connell: “a tribute”’ in *History Ireland*, v, no. 4 (1997), pp 26-31.

⁶⁶ Thomas Bartlett, ‘The Catholic Question in the eighteenth century’ in *History Ireland*, i, no. 1 (1993), pp 17-21, at p. 17.

⁶⁷ Terence Denman, ‘*Hibernia officina militum*: Irish recruitment to the British regular army, 1660-1815’ in *Irish Sword*, xx (1996), pp 148-66, at p. 158.

new recruit's creed.⁶⁸ Recruitment of Catholics continued steadily in the 1770s and by the American War of Independence, Ireland had become an important recruiting ground.⁶⁹ Bartlett has demonstrated that military needs had already resulted in some Catholic relief in 1778, during the American War of Independence, and this trend would be repeated in the French Revolutionary wars.⁷⁰

The gradual easing of restrictions imposed by the penal laws began to accelerate in the 1780s, as Blackstock claims that British politicians saw Irish Catholic loyalty as 'vital' during periods of war.⁷¹ Bartlett claims that British politicians also used the Catholic question to 'discipline' Irish Protestants who were troublesome in parliament, reminding them of their dependence on Britain.⁷² The practical needs of the British authorities, in particular Pitt and his government, began to align with the goals of the Catholic Committee, which had recently petitioned the king on Catholic relief, and other reformers. This resulted in the Catholic Relief Act of 1793, which allowed Catholics to vote, enter the legal profession, enrol in the University of Dublin, and officially bear arms like their Protestant brethren. McDowell believes that the bill was simply an 'emergency measure', rushed through parliament as war approached.⁷³ Undoubtedly certain units, such as the Catholic Irish Brigade, were formed as a direct result of the push for Catholic relief and Bartlett claims that Pitt and his Home Secretary Henry Dundas saw no need for segregation of Catholics in the armed forces.⁷⁴ In the final analysis, in 1793 Catholics were permitted to join the militia and the regular army in 1799.⁷⁵

Yet, despite the concessions granted, certain restrictions remained. Catholics were still barred from the senior positions in society, such as senior legal positions or the rank of

⁶⁸ Denman, *Hibernia officina militum*, p. 157.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 158. For more on Irish recruitment during the American War of Independence, see Ch. 2.

⁷⁰ Bartlett, 'The Anglo-Irish', p. 19.

⁷¹ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, pp 25-7.

⁷² Bartlett, 'The Anglo-Irish', p. 18.

⁷³ McDowell, 'The age of the United Irishmen', p. 318.

⁷⁴ Bartlett, 'Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion', p. 251.

⁷⁵ Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army', p. 36.

general or above in the military.⁷⁶ Furthermore, they could not take seats in parliament. As a result, political power remained firmly in Protestant hands during the 1790s, and Protestant politicians made decisions that would affect the many Irish Catholics who joined up during the wars. Resorting to expedient political decisions in an attempt to solve military problems posed by the wars would become commonplace, and this phenomenon will be examined in the case studies, as these decisions often had negative consequences for Irishmen in the British service. The extent to which Catholic Relief influenced military operations and the experiences of Irish soldiers is a key question which will also be addressed in the case studies in this thesis.

The Irish soldier's identity in the late eighteenth-century

Denman and Oxley have noted that Irish soldiers tended to be larger than their English counterparts, and have argued that the potato diet may have been a contributory factor, a view reiterated by Bartlett and Jeffery who also cite the mostly rural population of Ireland, as opposed to the urban population of England, as a potential contributory factor.⁷⁷ Indeed, Lieutenant William Grattan, who served with the Connaught Rangers in the Peninsular War, described the Irish soldier as 'accustomed all his life to be what an Englishman would consider to be half starved.'⁷⁸

Reference to potato diets amongst modern scholars suggests that the Irish soldier referred to here is an Irishman from the lower classes, and therefore likely a Catholic. However, such generalizations about the identity of Irish soldiers fail to take due cognisance of the nuances of Irish society at this time. As already stated, Irish soldiers in the British service were not exclusively poor Catholics; members of the Protestant Ascendancy also

⁷⁶ McDowell, 'The age of the United Irishmen', pp 316-8.

⁷⁷ Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery, 'An Irish military tradition?' in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1997), pp 1-25; Denman, '*Hibernia officina militum*', p. 166; Oxley, 'Living standards of women', p. 272.

⁷⁸ William Grattan, *Adventures with the Connaught Rangers: from 1809 to 1814* (2 vols, London, 1847), i, 118.

served in Irish regiments. This thesis therefore aims to capture the experiences of this fuller range of the Irishmen who enlisted in the British service.

The motivations of Irish soldiers enlisting in the British forces have been reassessed in recent scholarship. Forrest argues that young men, be they French, British, Irish or any other nationality, would have been motivated to enlist owing to a desire for freedom and adventure.⁷⁹ However, as part of his examination of Anglo-Irish relations, Jeffrey describes Irish recruitment to the British army as 'prosaic' rather than always reflecting a desire for 'adventure.'⁸⁰ Karsten mentions these 'green redcoats', describing them as Catholics of low income, poorer than either the rebels of the period or those who did not serve.⁸¹ As in Britain and elsewhere in Europe, the benefits of regular pay (in theory), food and accommodation, and also the chance of access to booty and plunder, attracted many recruits.⁸² Morrissey argues that the military spectacle of uniforms and pomp attracted the public's attention and contributed to the high recruitment of the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century.⁸³ Commanders and officers also appealed to men's sense of patriotism, encouraging males from across Britain and Ireland to enlist in the army, and this appeal to the Irishmen's sense of patriotism by politicians and commanders shall be investigated further in the case studies featured in this thesis.⁸⁴ Irish enlistment in the British army may be seen as influenced by wider events such as the rising level of warfare across Europe, as France raised huge new armies and her enemies rushed to counter with large scale

⁷⁹ Alan Forrest, *Napoleon's men: the soldiers of the Revolution and Empire* (London, 2002), pp 134-5.

⁸⁰ Keith Jeffery, 'Ch. 4: The Irish military tradition and the British Empire' in Keith Jeffery (ed.), *An Irish empire?: aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester, 1996), pp 94-122, at p.94.

⁸¹ Karsten, 'Irish Soldiers in the British army', p. 37.

⁸² Kevin Barry Linch, 'The recruitment of the British army 1807-1815' (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2001), p. 204.

⁸³ John Morrissey, 'A lost heritage: the Connaught Rangers and multivocal Irishness,' in Mark McCarthy (ed.), *Ireland's heritages: critical perspectives on memory and identity* (Aldershot, 2005), pp 71-87, at p. 77.

⁸⁴ Edward James Coss, 'All for the King's shilling: an analysis of the campaign and combat experiences of the British soldier in the Peninsular War, 1808-1814' (PhD thesis, Ohio State University, History, 2005), p. 18.

recruitment drives of their own.⁸⁵ In this study, the motivations of Irish Catholic and Protestant soldiers, in particular the officers, who enlisted in the British service, will be compared and contrasted, and the manner in which their different manifestations of ‘Irish’ identity came to influence their experiences in the British service will be explored.⁸⁶

LOYALISM, NATIONALISM AND INSTABILITY IN IRISH SOCIETY

Whilst eighteenth-century Ireland was mostly free from large scale violence, more low level disturbances occurred occasionally and banditry was a problem in remote areas. Garnham explains that in comparison with the ‘unusually’ peaceful state of Britain in the eighteenth century, ‘Ireland may be seen as a brutal and violent society’, though it was not unusual when compared to other European peasant societies.⁸⁷ The majority of violence was agrarian in nature, with groups and secret societies forming in the eighteenth century to preserve traditional farming practices that were threatened by modern methods. Nelson argues that the subdivision of land and leases which led to smaller and poorer holdings for the ordinary population was a cause of great dissent, especially when compared with the larger farms in Britain.⁸⁸ Disturbances were often sectarian in nature too. Boyne societies were formed in the early eighteenth century, to celebrate the Protestant victory in 1690.⁸⁹ The Peep o’Day Boys were formed in the 1780s to defend Protestants whilst attacking Catholics. The Defenders, in turn, were formed in the mid-1780s to defend Catholic farms and attack Protestant farms.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Allan Mallinson, *The making of the British army* (London, 2009), pp 133-4.

⁸⁶ For a full list of Irish regiments before and after 1793, see Chapter 1.

⁸⁷ Neal Garnham, ‘How violent was eighteenth-century Ireland?’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxx, no. 119 (1997), pp 377-92, at pp 391-2.

⁸⁸ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, pp 38-9.

⁸⁹ Ian McBride, ‘Memory and national identity in modern Ireland’ in Ian McBride (ed.), *History and memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), pp 1-42, at p. 18.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

The rise of nationalism and loyalism

The campaign for Catholic relief in late eighteenth-century Ireland is closely linked to the rise of nationalism, patriotism and loyalism. Clark describes nationalism as the ‘assertion that ‘peoples’ who shared language, culture (and ultimately race) would and should form polities which were homogeneous in these respects.’⁹¹ However, nationalism is a nineteenth-century construct, and active promotion of the ‘nation’ in the eighteenth century would have been more likely described as patriotism. Yet, according to Clark, the definition of patriotism depends on the context, as it was used in the twentieth century to denote a less aggressive form of nationalism whilst in the early eighteenth-century it included a form of ‘militant Protestantism.’⁹² Moreover, the term Irish Patriotism could also be used to describe the ideology of Irish Catholics who sought radical changes for themselves and their countrymen. For the purpose of this thesis, nationalism is taken to be the active promotion of the concept of a nation by a group from that nation. Esdaile has drawn attention to the fact that patriotism in the mass armies of the Napoleonic wars is a somewhat overlooked phenomenon and deserves more attention.⁹³ Irish patriotism, usually associated with the United Irishmen and later nineteenth-century nationalism, likewise deserves more attention. It has most often been used to describe the Irishmen who wished to separate Ireland from British rule, as an independent nation, but it may also be taken to describe those who wished to improve Ireland’s status without necessarily breaking away from British rule. One way to achieve this was by providing an invaluable contribution to the war effort, by Irish noblemen raising regiments of fellow Irishmen.

These newer regiments, combined with the traditional Irish regiments that had existed since the Williamite Wars, such as the 27th (Inniskilling) Regiment or the Royal

⁹¹ J. C. D. Clark, ‘Protestantism, nationalism, and national identity, 1660-1832’ in *Hist. Jn.*, xliii, no. 1 (2000), pp 249-76, at p. 250.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Charles Esdaile, ‘Patriots, partisans and land pirates in retrospect’ in Charles Esdaile (ed.), *Popular resistance in the French Wars: patriots, partisans and land pirates* (Basingstoke, 2005), pp 1-24, at p. 20.

Regiment of Ireland, would demonstrate not only Irish loyalty but also a boost to the status of Ireland within the structure of the burgeoning British Empire. Therefore, it may be reasoned that deployment of Irish regiments within the British military structure had an ideological, as well as a military function; these Irish soldiers demonstrated how the Irish military tradition, previously associated with the Jacobite cause and the French monarchy, could begin to develop in a significant way within the British military.

Ó Gráda claims that the perceived pervasive criminal violence in pre-Famine Ireland was ‘exaggerated’ and Ireland was not as violent as it seemed.⁹⁴ However, nationalism, patriotism and loyalism sometimes resulted in violent outcomes. McMahon describes how the competing factors in Irish society were sectarian hostility and the desire for stability.⁹⁵ As a result of growing violence in the 1790s, culminating in 1798, Catholic nationalists and Protestant loyalists came to represent the two extremes of Irish society,⁹⁶ two very different identities, yet both could be described as ‘Irish’ and both affected the experiences of the Irish in the British service. Interestingly, accounts from the period refer to both rebels and loyalists alike as patriots.

Loyalism was not a new concept in the 1790s, but had been in development since the wars of the seventeenth century, and in particular following the Protestant victory in the 1690s. Military formations in Ireland quickly adopted symbols of loyalism; for example, many of the Volunteers celebrated the Battle of the Boyne, and other Protestant victories, and wore orange cockades in 1778.⁹⁷ This interest in the pageantry of loyalism will be seen in the case studies, and in particular in the case of the yeomanry. Material displays of loyalism, such as the regimental colours, and the Union standard, are still important symbols

⁹⁴ Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: a new economic history, 1880-1939* (Oxford, 1994), p. 332.

⁹⁵ Richard McMahon, ‘“The madness of party”: sectarian homicide in Ireland, 1801-1850’ in *Crime, History and Societies*, xi, no. 1 (2007), pp 83-112.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁹⁷ David Miller, *Queen's Rebels: Ulster loyalism in historical perspective* (Dublin, 1978), p. 34.

of Ulster loyalism to this day.⁹⁸ Blackstock does warn however, that we must not equate modern loyalism of the twentieth and twenty-first century with the loyalism that developed in the 1790s.⁹⁹ He also warns against simply equating the yeomanry with Protestant loyalists, as there were many former Volunteers, constitutional reformers and Catholics in the force.¹⁰⁰ As part of the campaign against Catholic emancipation, it was argued by conservative loyalists that the Catholic tendency for rebellion, in 1641, 1798 and 1803, demonstrated their inability to take part in politics.¹⁰¹ Loyalism in Britain meanwhile, was a much more political than religious concept, with a strong opposition to French republicanism, rather than anti-Catholicism.¹⁰² This made it very similar to patriotism, with the common goal of defending the state and the monarch.

As Blackstock argues, loyalism was ‘neither simple, nor simplistic nor automatically deferential.’¹⁰³ As the case studies will investigate, loyalism could take many forms, and the vehement loyalism of some may be contrasted with the more liberal loyalism of others. Some of the characteristics associated with loyalism included varying levels of support for the monarch and his government, varying levels of pro-Britishness and varying levels of anti-Catholicism. Blackstock claims that the military arena was the place where loyalism was the most unambiguously pro-British; the military displays of loyalism celebrated their connection with Britain, which is understandable considering the wider Irish contribution to the British military that was beginning to take root in the late eighteenth-century.¹⁰⁴ Blackstock claims that during the wars there was an ‘increase in the overlapping of identities, rather than a re-defining.’¹⁰⁵ This is a solid argument, and the case studies will further explore how different Irish identities came together in military service in the 1790s,

⁹⁸ Allan Blackstock, *Loyalism in Ireland 1789-1829* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 6.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p. 7.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p.264.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 265.

and how loyalism could be displayed in different ways by different commanders, officers and the men.

The invasion threat during the French Revolutionary wars also contributed to a rise in loyalist ideology, this external threat strengthened loyalism in Ireland whilst also driving it towards militancy. This may be seen at all levels of Irish society, as the war and rising militarisation drove loyalists, patriots and radicals into armed militancy, and this militancy brought with it an instability in Irish society. This increase in instability during the late eighteenth century forced the British and Irish governments to raise more regiments to serve in Ireland, often with little or no training. The case studies will examine in detail this rapid militarisation of Ireland, a topic frequently overlooked in favour of the destabilisation of Irish society, culminating in the insurrection of 1798. This thesis will demonstrate how growing militarisation affected the experiences of Irishmen in the British service who were called to defend Ireland from their fellow Irishmen.

The Protestant defence tradition

Intrinsic to the Irish Protestant identity was the tradition of self-defence. Bartlett and Jeffery argue that the Protestant community believed that they owed their position, indeed their very existence, to their ancestors' 'military prowess'.¹⁰⁶ Miller draws the origins of this tradition to the 1640s, when Irish Protestant landowners found themselves isolated in the Irish countryside, and government authority did not extend far beyond urban areas.¹⁰⁷ This isolation was partially of their own creation, as taking on 'native' Catholic Irish as tenants was much cheaper than bringing over fellow Protestants from Britain as tenants.¹⁰⁸

Hill stresses that the Ascendancy and their fellow Protestants strongly associated themselves with the concept of the Protestant conquest during the Williamite Wars and that

¹⁰⁶ Bartlett and Jeffery, 'An Irish military tradition?', p. 8.

¹⁰⁷ Miller, *Queen's Rebels*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 10.

during the eighteenth century they continued this tradition of self-defence and banding together to hold onto their conquest.¹⁰⁹ This defence tradition also stemmed from, as Miller argues, their lack of faith in the central authorities; Protestants had to handle the challenge of defence by themselves.¹¹⁰ Fear of the ‘other’ and the importance of group mentality fostered this tradition of banding together. Irish Protestants, of all social ranks, were expected to partake in this defence tradition, as the entire Catholic body was believed to be ready for revolt at any moment.¹¹¹ Blackstock opines that the Ascendancy considered it their responsibility to lead the defence of Ireland against both external threats, most often France, and against internal insurrection by the Catholic population, and as a result of this fear, many banded together in official or semi-official armed groups.¹¹² The official formation was the militia, arrayed in 1715, 1719, 1745, 1756 and 1760, while unofficial formations included the Armagh Association in 1689.¹¹³ The bloodshed and violence of the wars of the seventeenth century remained in the folk memory, with tales of massacres of Protestants by Catholics, reinforcing this fear of another Catholic rebellion. The sporadic Jacobite rebellions in Britain in the early eighteenth century reinforced this defensive loyalist mentality, even if Irish Catholics did not rise in support of the Jacobites in Scotland.¹¹⁴

That tradition led to the formation of the Irish Volunteers during the American War of Independence, an independent amateur armed organisation raised to defend Ireland when regular forces were transferred to America. The Volunteers had a strong political element as many of their senior members were M.P.s and peers, and the movement successfully lobbied government for political reform. Higgins stresses the importance of the fact that the Volunteers even overcame localism to become a nationally organised movement.¹¹⁵ They

¹⁰⁹ Jacqueline Hill, 'The language and symbolism of conquest in Ireland, c. 1790-1850' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, xvii (2008), pp 165-86, at p. 172.

¹¹⁰ Miller, *Queen's Rebels*, p. 25.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 37.

¹¹² Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 41.

¹¹³ Miller, *Queen's Rebels*, p. 25.

¹¹⁴ Blackstock, *Loyalism in Ireland*, p. 28.

¹¹⁵ Higgins, *A nation of politicians*, p. 129.

were, according to Neal Garnham, a militia ‘outside of the confines of the law and control of the state’.¹¹⁶ One reason why the Volunteers were so popular, was that they were organised by the Ascendancy themselves, making them preferable to a government-led militia.¹¹⁷ The lack of any oath of allegiance added to the sense of self-defence and self-reliance.¹¹⁸ Blackstock emphasises, however, that ‘not everyone in parliament, nor in the Volunteers, wanted radical change’.¹¹⁹ This independence of the movement meant that whilst they remained loyal to the British crown they did become a platform for political reform in Ireland, as their commanders were members of the Ascendancy, many of whom resented, and resisted, British control of Irish affairs.

The defence tradition, as seen in the 1780s in the Irish Volunteers, may be seen again in the rapid militarisation of Ireland in 1793, with numerous regiments being raised and either sent abroad or stationed at home. As the authorities did not wish to see a return to the now-outlawed Volunteers, the militia and in particular the yeomanry offered Protestants an avenue to express their loyalty to government. McMahon is of the opinion that the yeomanry was regarded as ‘having a pronounced sectarian dimension.’¹²⁰ Bartlett has emphasised that while the yeomanry was neither entirely Protestant nor entirely Orange, the majority of yeomanry corps were both Protestant and Orange, with the greatest number of such corps in the north of the country.¹²¹ Blackstock describes the yeomanry as a link between the Protestant gentry and their ‘plebeian co-religionists’.¹²² He also describes the yeomanry and rank-and-file Orangemen as the ‘foot soldiers’ of the Protestant cause.¹²³ This again indicates the militant nature of loyalism in the late eighteenth century, an issue that had

¹¹⁶ Neal Garnham, *The militia in eighteenth century Ireland: in defence of the Protestant interest* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2012), viii.

¹¹⁷ Miller, *Queen's Rebels*, p. 33.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 47.

¹²⁰ McMahon, “‘The madness of party’”, p. 87.

¹²¹ Bartlett, ‘Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion: Ireland, 1793-1803’, p. 265.

¹²² Allan Blackstock, ‘Tommy Downshire's boys: popular protest, social change and political manipulation in mid-Ulster 1829–1847’ in *Past and Present*, cxvii, no. 1 (2007), pp 125-72, at p. 128.

¹²³ Blackstock, *Loyalism in Ireland*, p. 134.

the potential to be an advantage, or disadvantage, to government, depending on how it was handled.

The defence tradition may also explain why the gentry enlisted as officers of regiments of militia, yeomanry and a small number of Irish fencible regiments. Their motivations have been described as 'logical' by Karsten; they wished to defend both Britain's glory and their own properties.¹²⁴ He stresses the importance of family tradition within the Ascendancy tradition, citing the example of successive generations of a just one family serving in the militia during the 1790s, the Crimean War, the Boer War and the First World War.¹²⁵

Blackstock has extensively examined the links between the Irish Volunteers and the later yeomanry.¹²⁶ This thesis will explore this link further, particularly in relation to the Doneraile Yeomanry Cavalry, and investigate whether a Protestant tradition of self-defence is evident in formations with a less direct link to the Volunteers, such as the Irish fencibles.

The United Irishmen and the 1798 rebellion

The success of the French and American Revolutions inspired Irish radicals to seek similar independence, a subject which receives much attention in the literature. General histories of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars tend to mention Ireland only in relation to the failed invasion attempt of 1796 and the failed rebellion of 1798, which is understandable given the range and scale of events unfolding across Europe. For example, Esdaile's study of the Napoleonic wars refers to the lacklustre French support for the United Irishmen and their rebellion of 1798.¹²⁷ Stack offers a brief overview of Ireland during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars but as an MA thesis, this work is far from

¹²⁴ Karsten, 'Irish Soldiers in the British army', p. 34.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 35.

¹²⁶ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, pp 45-97; Allan Blackstock, *Double traitors?: the Belfast Volunteers and Yeomen 1778-1828* (Belfast, 2001).

¹²⁷ Esdaile, *Napoleon's wars*, p. 47.

comprehensive.¹²⁸ Others military histories, such as Connelly's *The Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon*, do not mention any Irish involvement at all.¹²⁹

Many histories of Ireland during the eighteenth century, such as McDowell's chapters in *A new history of Ireland*,¹³⁰ Duffy's *Concise history of Ireland*,¹³¹ and Bartlett and Jeffery's *A military history of Ireland*,¹³² tend to focus on the rise of the United Irishmen, the failed French expedition to Bantry Bay in December 1796 and the insurrection of 1798. Bredin's *A history of the Irish soldier* makes little reference to Ireland during the wars, apart from brief mentions of the 1798 rebellion, the Act of Union and the economic hardship of the country, this despite the many Irish soldiers serving in the British service at this time.¹³³ Bartlett's chapter on the 1790s in *A military history of Ireland* is particularly focused on the United Irishmen and the rebellion of 1798, perhaps in part because this work was published so close to the bicentennial of the rebellion.¹³⁴ This historiographical challenge is discussed later in this introduction, but the lack of coverage may also be associated with logistical challenges. A fire in the Four Courts in Dublin in 1922 destroyed many government and military files relating to the British administration in Ireland, and the majority of information on the Irish military in the eighteenth century is now located in the National Archives in Kew and elsewhere in Britain. The quality and quantity of these records varies considerably: this has contributed to the lack of research on Ireland during the wars and the corresponding focus on domestic topics such as 1798 and the United Irishmen. It is undeniable that these events were very significant for the course of Irish history, as the rise in Irish nationalism, culminating in the 1798 rebellion, would contribute to the passing of the

¹²⁸ Wayne Stack, 'Rebellion, invasion and occupation: a military history of Ireland, 1793-1815' (M.A. thesis, University of Canterbury, 2008).

¹²⁹ Connelly, *The wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon*.

¹³⁰ McDowell, 'The age of the United Irishmen' and 'Revolution and the union' in *A new history of Ireland: vol. IV Eighteenth century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford, 1986), pp 289-338 and pp 339-73.

¹³¹ Séan Duffy, *The concise history of Ireland* (Dublin, 2000)..

¹³² Bartlett and Jeffery (eds), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1997).

¹³³ A. E. C. Bredin, *A history of the Irish soldier* (Belfast, 1987).

¹³⁴ Bartlett, 'Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion', pp 247-93.

subsequent Act of Union. However, it is also vital to consider the wider military, social and political context in which these events occurred, both within Ireland and further afield.

It is worth stressing that the perceived unreliability of Irish troops during the insurrection has been proved to be inaccurate; Karsten states that only about 60 men were court-martialled for disloyalty during the period of the rebellion.¹³⁵ Nelson also claims that low numbers of militiamen were tried and convicted of subversion the preceding year, and stresses that this reflects well on the conduct of Irish troops when compared with the large number of men in the militia in general.¹³⁶ The vast majority of Irish soldiers in the British army remained loyal, despite the hopes of rebel leaders and fears of politicians. Bartlett and Jeffery have emphasised that ‘given the hundreds of thousands who served, it is the loyalty of the Irish soldiers which is impressive, not the disaffection of a few.’¹³⁷ Only one Irish regiment, the 5th Dragoons, was disbanded after the rebellion, and even then only a few of its men were found to have been disaffected.¹³⁸ Bartlett claims that following the rebellion the militia became the ‘nursery’ for recruiting to the regulars whilst the yeomanry became the main peace-keeping force in Ireland.¹³⁹ However, Nelson disputes this, countering that the militia still played an important role in the defence of Ireland.¹⁴⁰ This issue will be further investigated in the chapter relating to the Irish militia.

The theme of British incompetence during the 1798 rebellion has been re-examined and re-evaluated in recent years. Bartlett argues that Dublin Castle’s intelligence network of informers and spies was just as important in the government’s victory as the lack of French support for the rebels.¹⁴¹ Lindsay is of the opinion that the military under-secretary for

¹³⁵ Karsten, ‘Irish soldiers in the British army’, p. 42.

¹³⁶ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 174.

¹³⁷ Bartlett and Jeffery, ‘An Irish military tradition?’, p. 16.

¹³⁸ David Murphy, *The Irish Brigades, 1685-2006: A gazetteer of Irish military service, past and present* (Dublin, 2007), p. 140.

¹³⁹ Bartlett, ‘Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion’, p. 292.

¹⁴⁰ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 255.

¹⁴¹ Thomas Bartlett, ‘Informers, informants & information: the secret history of the 1790s’ in *History Ireland*, vi, no. 2 (1998), pp 23-6, at p. 23.

Ireland, Edward Cooke, was particularly instrumental in organising the intelligence network by himself and reporting the situation to his superiors.¹⁴² This use of intelligence will be further investigated in this thesis, as the broader role of Ireland in British and French military strategy is explored.

The Act of Union

The Act of Union which followed the rebellion brought an end to the Irish parliament and for over a century, Irish affairs would be run from Westminster. The historiography of the Union encompasses a range of diverse interpretation. Some scholars, for example, emphasise the Union's impact on the economy; Oxley describes Ireland after the Union as an 'integral but subservient part of the British economy'.¹⁴³ Other such as Patrick Geoghegan claim that the Union was an act of 'arrogance' that demonstrated the 'ineffective' nature of government in the 1790s.¹⁴⁴ Kelly stresses the historiographical position of the Union, and how it has been mostly described in relation to 'how it was perceived by its opponents and critics.'¹⁴⁵ Less attention has been paid to those who supported it. Jupp argues that the Union was seriously debated both in the British parliament and by the British people in general in the form of pamphlets, and Britain was far from unaware of the situation in Ireland.¹⁴⁶ As Nelson notes, the authorities feared a 'serious division ... on the precedence of the Volunteers' if resistance to the Union grew too strong amongst the Ascendancy.¹⁴⁷ Kelly has shown that while Irish Protestants had been positive about their parliament, they eventually chose the security of the 'Anglo-Irish connection.'¹⁴⁸ Geoghegan refutes earlier claims that no illegal funds were used to bribe Irish politicians to accept the act, providing evidence of monetary bribery as well as

¹⁴² Deirdre Lindsay, 'The Rebellion Papers' in *History Ireland*, vi, no. 2 (1998), pp 18-22, at p. 19.

¹⁴³ Oxley, 'Living standards of women', p. 275.

¹⁴⁴ Patrick Geoghegan, *The Act of Union, a study in high politics, 1798-1801* (Dublin, 1999).

¹⁴⁵ James Kelly, 'The historiography of the Act of Union' in Michael Brown, Patrick Geoghegan and James Kelly (eds), *The Irish Act of Union, 1800: bicentennial essays* (Dublin, 2003), pp 5-36, at p. 5.

¹⁴⁶ Peter Jupp, 'Britain and the Union, 1797-1801' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, x (2000), pp 197-219, at p. 218.

¹⁴⁷ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 242.

¹⁴⁸ James Kelly, 'The failure of opposition' in Brown, Geoghegan and Kelly (eds), *The Irish Act of Union* (Dublin, 2003), pp 108-28, at p. 128.

the allocation of titles and various sinecures.¹⁴⁹ Additionally, the allocation of positions in the Westminster House of Commons and House of Lords was used as an incentive, and the list of politicians who did not object to the union and therefore received these awards was known as the Act of Union Blacklist. Hill emphasises that, ‘the main post-Union trends – anglicisation, militarisation and the advance of the institutional churches – were already underway before 1800.’¹⁵⁰ She also stresses that with the Union, Protestants moved away from patriotism and towards unionism.¹⁵¹ Likewise, the Patriot movement had been spent after 1798 and the majority of the population, the Catholic majority, were not inclined to resist very strongly.¹⁵²

As will be seen in the following chapters, Ireland became increasingly militarised after the declaration of war in 1793, with many new regiments raised to fight overseas, along with the militia, yeomanry and fencibles raised for the defence of Ireland itself. Many British regiments were also regularly rotated through Ireland during this period. The experiences of Irishmen in the British service too were shaped by the varying attitudes of politicians and commanders towards religion, both Catholic and Protestant, a key theme that emerges in the case studies featured in this thesis. As will become apparent, Irish identity was a complex concept that changed and developed as the wars progressed.

The proposed Catholic emancipation that was expected to follow soon after the Union did not happen for almost thirty years, due to strong Protestant opposition headed by George III himself, and even resulted in Prime Minister William Pitt’s resignation and the collapse of his government.¹⁵³ Blackstock claims that since emancipation did not immediately follow the Union, religion became an important issue in the army, with the new administration of Henry Addington preferring the perceived reliability of the Protestant

¹⁴⁹ Geoghegan, *The Act of Union*, viii-ix.

¹⁵⁰ Jacqueline Hill, ‘Irish identities before and after the Act of Union’ in *Radharc*, ii (2001), pp 51-73, at p. 66.

¹⁵¹ Hill, *From patriots to unionists*, p. 1.

¹⁵² Kelly, ‘The failure of opposition’, p. 109.

¹⁵³ Geoghegan, *The Act of Union*, Ch. 7.

yeomanry over the mistrusted Catholic militia.¹⁵⁴ This mixing of the army and politics will be further discussed in the case studies.

Beyond the political arena, the Union had a significant influence on military and social events, and it is important to emphasise that it did not come about simply as a result of the 1798 rebellion, but also in response to the growing distrust of the British authorities in the Ascendancy's ability to run Irish affairs. After the Union many militiamen transferred to the regulars, while many Irish military commanders were rewarded for their support of the union. The impact of the Union on the experiences Irishmen who served in the British army, both enlisted men and the officer corps, will be analysed in the case studies in this thesis.

'IRISH' IDENTITY IN THE IRISH UNITS OF THE BRITISH ARMY

It is clear from the literature that different elements within Irish society had different ideas of identity, mostly delineated along religious and economic lines: most of the wealthy were Protestant while the majority of Catholics were of the lower class. Yet military service provided a context wherein Irishmen of all social and religious classes came together in the defence of united goals: the defence of Ireland and Britain, and the defeat of the so-called 'tyranny' of the French Revolution. The concept of nationalism, as defined in the preceding section, may be applied to both Protestants and Catholics in Ireland during the late eighteenth century, since many Catholics and Protestants alike wished to see improvements in Ireland, from political, social and economic perspectives. Military service offered an opportunity to demonstrate both loyalty and national pride.

Cullen argues that the Catholic Irish traditional openness to seeking employment abroad, such as military service, made it easy to transfer to the British service when

¹⁵⁴ Allan Blackstock, 'The Union and the military, 1801-c.1830' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, x (2000), pp 329-51, at pp 342-3.

required.¹⁵⁵ This ‘Wild Geese’ identity had been closely associated with the Jacobite cause, which sought to restore James II’s heirs to the British throne, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. As the eighteenth century progressed the Jacobites’ cause waned and ceased to be a rallying point for Irish soldiers, especially following the end of the Seven Years War,¹⁵⁶ and service to the Protestant British monarchy became less contentious. Kennedy suggests that Irish enlistment in the French army in the eighteenth century was not necessarily a demonstration of ideological support for the Jacobite cause, arguing that it was also due to a ‘labour migration’, at least until the British army offered a nearer alternative.¹⁵⁷ Another recruiter was the East India Company, the British organisation that employed its own army to maintain British colonial possessions.¹⁵⁸ Bartlett and Jeffrey stress that ‘the military history of Ireland cannot concern itself only with battles and campaigns, army organisation and recruitment’ and that all these aspects are important but only when one also considers the issue of Irish identity.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, Hill highlights the need for further study to determine whether or not military participation fostered a sense of ‘British identity’ in Irish people.¹⁶⁰ Hill also describes the role of the army in society as ‘ambiguous’, neither a complete part of society yet not entirely an army of occupation either.¹⁶¹

The two leading nineteenth-century historians of Ireland, Froude and Lecky, with their focus on Anglo-Irish politics and the rebellion of 1798, do not give enough attention to military matters, including the fact that many more Irishmen served loyally during the wars than rebelled. This omission is likely due to the fact that both opposed Home Rule and therefore, were unlikely to draw great attention to Irishmen serving loyally in the British

¹⁵⁵ Louis Cullen, ‘Catholics under the penal laws’ in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, i (1986), pp 23-36, at p. 36.

¹⁵⁶ Éamonn Ó Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite cause, 1685-1766: a fatal attachment* (Dublin, 2002).

¹⁵⁷ Catriona Kennedy, ‘‘True Brittons and real Irish’’: Irish Catholics in the British army during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars’ in Catriona Kennedy, and Matthew McCormack (eds), *Soldiering in Britain and Ireland, 1750-1850* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp 37-56, at p. 40.

¹⁵⁸ Bartlett and Jeffrey, ‘An Irish military tradition?’, p. 12.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁶⁰ Hill, ‘Irish identities before and after the Act of Union’, pp 62-3.

¹⁶¹ Hill, ‘Convergence and conflict’, p. 1047.

military, instead choosing to draw attention to events like the rebellion of 1798 and the perceived inefficiency of the Irish Ascendancy. Foster and Wyatt concur that the interests of both Froude and Lecky were not historical, but topical to their own times.¹⁶² As such, the experiences of the many Irish soldiers in the British army have been overlooked in traditional histories, as has their role in the wider context of military and political events of the time.

Modern studies that address Irish participation in the British military tend to be examinations of a particular formation or regiment, such as Nelson's *The Irish militia* or the work of McAnally in the late 1930s, which do not examine in detail the wider political and social context in which the units operated.¹⁶³ Blackstock's *An Ascendancy army*, Mike Chappell's brief work *Wellington's Peninsula regiments: the Irish* and Harris's work on the 87th regiment, later the Irish Fusiliers, are further examples in which focus of the study is on a formation, without a detailed analysis of the wider context.¹⁶⁴ Stuart Reid's *Armies of the Irish Rebellion* briefly examines the Irish militia, fencibles and yeomanry, as well as a short examination of the rebel forces.¹⁶⁵ Murphy's *The Irish Brigades* offers a valuable list of Irish regiments in a number of armies, including the British army during the 1790s, illustrating how widespread the Irish military diaspora was.¹⁶⁶ *The Irish Sword*, the periodical of the Military History Society of Ireland, includes many valuable articles on Irish military affairs in the 1790s, such as Denman's examination of Irish officers in the British army, Atkinson's study of Irish regiments or Hayes-McCoy's examinations of the fencible corps and the government forces during the French landing in 1798.¹⁶⁷ Valuable articles from other

¹⁶² Foster, 'History and the Irish Question', p. 179; Anne Wyatt, 'Froude, Lecky and 'The Humblest Irishman'' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xix, no. 75 (1975), pp 261-85, at p. 261.

¹⁶³ Nelson, *The Irish militia*; Henry McAnally, *The Irish militia, 1793-1816* (Dublin, 1949).

¹⁶⁴ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*; Mike Chappell, *Wellington's Peninsula regiments (1): the Irish* (Oxford, 2003); Henry Harris, *The Royal Irish Fusiliers* (London, 1972).

¹⁶⁵ Stuart Reid, *Armies of the Irish Rebellion 1798* (Oxford, 2011).

¹⁶⁶ Murphy, *The Irish Brigades*.

¹⁶⁷ Terence Denman, 'Hibernia officina militum'; C. T. Atkinson, 'The Irish regiments of the line in the British army' in *Irish Sword*, i (1949-53), pp.20-3; G. A. Hayes-McCoy, 'Fencible corps in Ireland

periodicals include Karsten's 'Irish soldiers in the British army, 1792-1922' and Dunne-Lynch's examination of humour and the Irish soldier in the Peninsular War.¹⁶⁸ Karsten's work is rather broad ranging, however, and Dunne-Lynch focuses solely on the Irish in Spain and Portugal. All of these examples are specialised military history studies, often of single regiments, formations or officers.

Desmond and Jean Bowen's *Heroic option: the Irish in the British army* examines Irish participation in the British service up to the twentieth century, and as such, does not treat the period of the French Revolutionary wars in significant detail.¹⁶⁹ Irish participation in the British military during the wars also often features in larger studies of the British army, such as Holmes' *Redcoat: the British Soldier in the age of horse and musket*, Houlding's *Fit for service*, Mallinson's *The making of the British army* and David's *All the King's men*.¹⁷⁰ However, in such broad works, specific discussion of the Irishmen in the British army in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is often fleeting. Kennedy briefly investigates Irish Catholics in the British army but mostly focuses on the Irish serving abroad during the Peninsular War,¹⁷¹ highlighting that study of those who remained in Ireland while in the British service constitutes a significant gap in the literature. The PhD thesis of Edward Coss offers a comprehensive assessment of the British soldier in the Peninsular War while Kevin Linch examines the political and military motivations behind recruitment in the latter years of the Napoleonic wars, but again the focus of these works is not the Irish soldier.¹⁷² Cookson's *The British armed nation*, includes a dedicated chapter on Ireland during the wars of 1793-1815, and also goes some way towards addressing wider political and social context,

1782-1803' in *Irish Sword*, ii (1954-56), pp 140-3; G. A. Hayes-McCoy, 'The government forces which opposed the Irish insurgents of 1798' in *Irish Sword*, iv (1959-60), pp 16-28.

¹⁶⁸ Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army'; Nicholas Dunne-Lynch, 'Humour and defiance: Irish troops and their humour in the Peninsular War' in *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, lxxxv (2007), pp 62-78.

¹⁶⁹ Desmond Bowen and Jean Bowen, *Heroic option: the Irish in the British army* (London, 2005).

¹⁷⁰ Richard Holmes, *Redcoat: the British soldier in the age of horse and musket* (London, 2001); J. A. Houlding, *Fit for service: the training of the British army, 1715-1795* (Oxford, 1981); Mallinson, *The making of the British army*, p. 134; David, *All the King's men*.

¹⁷¹ Kennedy, 'True Brittons and Real Irish', pp 37-56.

¹⁷² Coss, 'All for the King's shilling'; Linch, 'The recruitment of the British army'.

such as how British military power came to depend on manpower from Ireland and Scotland.¹⁷³

The example of the Scottish contribution to the British military poses some interesting questions; how did Scotland go from being a rival kingdom in Britain, then a rebellious territory under English rule, and finally an integrated part of the United Kingdom, while Ireland did not? Geographic considerations must be taken into account, Ireland being its own island, as well as religious consideration; Ireland was predominantly Catholic while Scotland was more mixed, with a majority Protestant population. By the time of the French Revolutionary wars Scotland had become integrated with the rest of Britain but the fact that Ireland still remained a separate kingdom made integration more difficult. The question of the Scottish in the British military is one that has of course received scholarly attention,¹⁷⁴ and while it is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is useful to consider their experiences alongside those of the Irish, as they were often similar. For example, the *Écossais Royaux* was a Catholic Scottish regiment that served in the French army during the eighteenth-century, and took part in the failed 1745 Jacobite Rebellion, alongside the Irish Brigade.¹⁷⁵ The contrast between the Scottish and Irish in the British service will be discussed later in the thesis.

There has been little comprehensive analysis of the links between Irish and British identity in relation to the Irishmen in the British service. In fact, Colley specifically does not include Ireland in her study of how the people of the United Kingdom developed a British identity (which she argues was very much Protestant and anti-French), as Ireland was too different and too Catholic and too pro-French, in her opinion, with Irishmen ‘rarely willing and able’ to play a part in the invention of Britishness.¹⁷⁶ Yet Moody’s examination of the

¹⁷³ Cookson, *The British armed nation*, pp 153-81.

¹⁷⁴ E. M. Spiers, J. A. Crang and M. J. Strickland (eds), *A military history of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2012).

¹⁷⁵ Mallinson, *The making of the British army*, p. 89.

¹⁷⁶ Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837* (Yale, 1992, 2nd ed., 2005), p. 8.

memoirs of Henry Walsh, press-ganged into service in the Royal Navy, gives an example of a Catholic Irishman who also saw himself as British (as well as Irish) and who was proud of it.¹⁷⁷ Morrissey claims that the relationship between Ireland and Britain may be described as a 'fundamental ambiguity' that is difficult to define.¹⁷⁸ However, Clark recognises that separate and highly resilient English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish identities, a 'diverse and plural system of identities', exist within and alongside British identity rather than being absorbed and replaced by a single, rigid notion of 'Britishness'.¹⁷⁹ Oliver uses an interesting yet apt metaphor to illustrate the close relationships between the countries, 'Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales are like tenants of a shared house. We each have our own room but we meet others in the hall, the kitchen and in the living room all the time'.¹⁸⁰ Kennedy's *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars* explores the military and civilian histories of this period, but with a literary focus on how soldiers and civilians over both Britain and Ireland narrated their experiences of the wars, and therefore a more detailed examination of the Irish soldiers' experiences, would be of benefit.¹⁸¹

It is evident that in many ways, the late eighteenth-century was a period when both Irish and British identity was in a developmental stage, as it was across Europe. Irish society was a complex combination of identities, and scholarship has tended to focus on single aspects of Irish identity, rather than considering the differing identities that coexisted at this time. In this thesis, the interplay between the different classes of Irishmen (Protestant and Catholic, wealthy and poor) who came together in the British service will be explored, and the impact that differences in social identity between mostly Protestant officers and their majority Catholic rank and file had on the experiences of Irish soldiers shall be examined.

¹⁷⁷ T. W. Moody, 'An Irish countryman in the British navy, 1809-15 : the memoirs of Henry Walsh' in *Irish Sword*, iv (1960), pp 149-56; iv (1961), pp 228-45; v (1961), pp 41-55.

¹⁷⁸ Morrissey, 'A lost heritage', p. 83.

¹⁷⁹ Clark, 'Protestantism, nationalism, and national identity', p. 275.

¹⁸⁰ Neil Oliver, *A history of Scotland* (London, 2009), xvi.

¹⁸¹ Catriona Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars: military and civilian experience in Britain and Ireland* (Basingstoke, 2013).

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT OF THIS THESIS

While there is much research on Irish participation in the British armed forces, participation during the French Revolutionary wars has been largely neglected in the literature.

Furthermore, a recurring problem in the literature is the absence of contextualisation of Irish military affairs in wider European military, political and social history, which can be traced to historiographical divides.

Within Irish historical scholarship, there has tended to be a division between nationalist and anti-nationalist approaches. Nationalist approaches have tended to emphasise events connected with the struggle for Irish independence from British rule in a rather teleological manner: events developed as Ireland moved towards independence. This may explain why scholarship on the period of the French Revolutionary wars has tended to focus on the 1798 rebellion, Tone, and the United Irishmen. Coffey highlights this problem with the example of how Irish teachers were encouraged, in the 1930s, of drawing clear (and favourable) comparisons between Tone and Padraig Pearse, as part of a highly nationalist curriculum.¹⁸² More recent scholarship, although not as nationalist in nature, still focuses on the same topics and themes, such as Bartlett and Jeffrey's *Military history of Ireland*, Bartlett's *Life of Wolfe Tone*, Pakenham's *Year of Liberty* and Bartlett, Dickson, Keogh and Whelan's *The 1798 Rebellion: A bicentenary perspective*.¹⁸³ Nationalist historiography had envisaged Ireland as an island of two distinct nations, with little interaction between the Gaelic and the Anglo-Irish, but more modern historiography has discounted this as 'too simplistic' and not acknowledging 'a sizeable Catholic and Protestant middle class', as well

¹⁸² Mary Coffey, 'The teaching of Irish history in the 1920s' in Steven Ellis (ed.), *Empires and states in European perspectives* (Pisa, 2002), pp 111-25, at p. 118.

¹⁸³ Bartlett and Jeffery, *A military history of Ireland*; Bartlett, *Life of Wolfe Tone*, Thomas Pakenham, *The year of liberty: the great Irish rebellion of 1798* (3rd ed., London, 1972); Thomas Bartlett, David Dickson, Daire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds), *The 1798 Rebellion: A bicentenary perspective* (Dublin, 2003).

as the Presbyterian population.¹⁸⁴ Bartlett, Dickson, Keogh and Whelan's *1798 Rebellion* is considered the landmark publication on the topic, yet it is still somewhat nationalist in nature, in particular in Whelan's introductory sections that argue that the United Irishmen represented a coherent and organised revolutionary movement.

Beiner notes that the 'voluminous and wide ranging' coverage of the bicentenary in 1998 of the 1798 rebellion was most useful in its 'introduction of debates on memory as key topics in modern Irish history'.¹⁸⁵ The fact that most of the troops who suppressed the rebellion were also Irish has largely been overlooked and this post-independence tradition of focusing on Irish nationalist history, and the subsequent revisionist history, has resulted in a gradual forgetting of the role of the Irish in the British army. This cultural amnesia is also evident in the disparity between commemorations of two events that took place in 1916; the Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme, in which many Irishmen fought and died. The former has been commemorated regularly while the latter only received an official commemoration in the Irish Republic in 2006. The governments of the newly independent Republic, and its historians, chose to focus on the Easter Rising in a quest for a nationalist foundation myth,¹⁸⁶ one that was incompatible with service in the British military. Morrissey highlights this problem, giving the example of how his students at the National University of Ireland Galway were completely unaware of the Connaught Rangers, despite being one of the most famous of the Irish regiments from 1793 to 1922.¹⁸⁷ Morrissey claims that Irish participation in the British service has been virtually 'erased from public memory in post-independence Ireland'.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Lesa Ní Mhugháile, 'Anglo-Irish antiquarianism and the transformation of Irish identity' in David A. Valone and Jill Marie Bradbury (eds), *Anglo-Irish identities, 1571-1845* (Cranbury, NJ, 2008), pp 181-98, at p. 189.

¹⁸⁵ Guy Beiner, Review of *Rebellions. Memoir, Memory and 1798* by Tom Dunne in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, xix (2004), pp 247-9, at p. 249.

¹⁸⁶ Jérôme Aan De Wiel, 'L'église catholique irlandaise pendant la première guerre mondiale, 1914-1918' in *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, no. 220 (2004/5), pp 71-83, at p. 71.

¹⁸⁷ Morrissey, 'A lost heritage', p. 71.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Anti-nationalist history, which Perry describes as revisionist, seeks to question the traditional viewpoint of 700 years of British oppression.¹⁸⁹ Curtin describes how revisionism emerged in Irish historiography in the later twentieth century, as historians such as Moody and Foster sought to remove the layers of myth from Irish historiography and examine events in a more revisionist manner.¹⁹⁰ Ellis explains that revisionism happened as a result of 'the continuing need to reinterpret the past'.¹⁹¹ However, Bradshaw criticises the 'value-free' revisionism that he believes is too detached and clinical in its examination of important (and often traumatic) events such as the Great Famine, arguably the most significant event in nineteenth-century Ireland, in which over 1 million people died.¹⁹² Perry also notes that the more-traditional nationalist approach criticises the anti-nationalist or revisionist approach as 'neo-unionist' and a justification for British rule and the subsequent partition of Ireland.¹⁹³

Another important consideration is that although anti-nationalist history tends to be less teleological than nationalist history, there is nevertheless a tendency to focus on specific events; both nationalist and anti-nationalist/revisionist history focuses on 1798, Easter 1916 and the War of Independence. In particular, much debate has been generated over commemoration of the Easter Rising in 1916 and the subsequent War of Independence.¹⁹⁴ As anti-nationalist history seeks to revise nationalist viewpoints, it follows that anti-nationalist approaches would also focus on the same key events that dominate nationalist history. For example, McDowell's chapters on the 1790s in *A new history of Ireland*, described by Curtin as an early revisionist work, do not mention the French Revolutionary wars in detail, but

¹⁸⁹ Robert Perry, 'Revising Irish history: the Northern Ireland conflict and the war of ideas' in *Journal of European Studies*, xl, no. 4 (2010), pp 329-54, at p. 330.

¹⁹⁰ Nancy J. Curtin, "'Varieties of Irishness": historical revisionism, Irish style' in the *Journal of British Studies*, xxxv, no. 2 (1996), pp 195-219, at pp 195-6.

¹⁹¹ S. G. Ellis, 'Historiographical debate: representations of the past in Ireland: whose past and whose present?' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxvii, no. 108 (1991), pp 289-308, at p. 290.

¹⁹² Brendan Bradshaw, 'Nationalism and historical scholarship in modern Ireland' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxvi, no. 104 (1989), pp 329-351, at p. 338.

¹⁹³ Perry, 'Revising Irish history', p. 330.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 342-9.

again focus on the insurrection of 1798.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, Barnard argues that recent scholarship on a variety of topics have been conscripted by a need to explain the events of 1798, and the subsequent Act of Union.¹⁹⁶

Barnard also notes that despite highlighting the inadequacies of Lecky and his contemporaries, the use of ‘veteran’ historians such as McDowell and Beckett in the fourth volume of *A new history of Ireland* ‘recapitulates the approaches and insights of an earlier generation’¹⁹⁷ (that is, Lecky and Froude), perhaps limiting the potential for new and deeper analysis of broader issues, and increasing the potential for repetition of existing misconceptions. Hill expresses surprise at the extent to which the Victorian-era historians such as Lecky and Froude have continued to dominate more modern Irish historiography despite their obvious limitations.¹⁹⁸ McBride emphasises the point that present-day conflicts in Ireland ‘tend to express themselves through the personalities of the past’,¹⁹⁹ as contemporary events can colour our perception of history.

Perry advocates a third historiographical approach, that of post-revisionism, which combines elements of nationalist and anti-nationalist/revisionist history, in a manner that is more ‘realistic, empirical, flexible and self-critical’.²⁰⁰ Curtin describes how ‘today’s revisionists and post-revisionists revise the revisionists of a generation before, returning, but with more conceptual and analytical rigor, to a previous position’.²⁰¹ It is important that this post-revisionism recognises both the strengths and weakness of the other methods.

Military, political and social factors combined to create a complex sense of identity for the Irishmen in the British service, and these competing and conflicting senses of identity

¹⁹⁵ McDowell, ‘The age of the United Irishmen’ and ‘Revolution and the union’, pp 289-338; Curtin, ‘Varieties of Irishness’, p. 196.

¹⁹⁶ Barnard, ‘Farewell to old Ireland’, pp 909-10.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 909.

¹⁹⁸ Hill, ‘Convergence and conflict’, pp 1039-40.

¹⁹⁹ McBride, ‘Memory and national identity’, p. 2.

²⁰⁰ Perry, ‘Revising Irish history’, p. 331.

²⁰¹ Curtin, ‘Varieties of Irishness’, p. 218.

affected both the experiences of the men and events in Ireland. Yet scholarship on Irish participation in the British military during the wars has largely neglected the wider social and political context, both in Ireland and abroad. The thesis will explore the factors that shaped the experiences of Irishmen serving in various units within the British army, and will demonstrate that although they were united as ‘Irish’ in the British service, their individual experiences of different units were especially influenced by their different religious and social identities. This thesis seeks to examine the experiences of Irishmen in the British service with a post-revisionist perspective, endeavouring to consider the primary source material in a balanced manner which recognises the importance of key events such as the 1798 rebellion but does not allow these events to dominate the historical narrative to the detriment of the valuable social history of these men and their regiments.

METHODOLOGY

From this exploration of the literature a number of key ideas and events may be identified as having a significant effect on Ireland across social, political and military aspects. These include the development of the Protestant Ascendancy’s social identity, and the corresponding Irish Catholic identity, as well as the rise of nationalism and loyalism, as expressed through military means.

In this thesis, these issues will be explored through an examination of primary source material gathered from archives in Ireland, the United Kingdom and France. These mostly comprise letters and orders written to and from various military and political officials, as well as the regimental records of the case studies. This material has not survived for every regiment, and furthermore, due to the very large number of Irishmen serving in the British army during the French Revolutionary wars, and the many Irish regiments raised from 1793 onwards, it would not be feasible to complete a comprehensive assessment of all Irish activity in the British army at this time. Therefore, in the chapters that follow, national

and international politics and military matters are related to the experiences of four case study regiments, summarised in Table 1, the activities of whom are well-documented in primary source material.

These case studies are representative of different aspects of Irish militarisation during the 1790s (see Table 1), as well as different aspects of Irish identity, and were influenced in varying ways by the turbulent social and political climate in Ireland and the wider world. As such, the varied range of case studies will illuminate the wide-ranging experiences of Irishmen in the British service and give a more balanced understanding of how the experiences of Irishmen in the British military were influenced by both domestic and international events. Irish regiments of the regular British army were sent out of Ireland as soon as they were raised. As they were therefore likely to have been less influenced by local factors, they are not examined in this thesis. By contrast the regiments most affected were those raised for home-service, such as the militia and yeomanry, or the Irish Brigade, whose experience and place of service were heavily influenced by Anglo-Irish political manoeuvring at that time.

The experiences of each unit are compared and contrasted both with similar units, and with other case studies, in order to better understand how each formation was influenced by social, political, military and economic factors both in Ireland and further afield. The role of each unit in the larger context of the British war effort will also be explored.

Table 1. Details of case study regiments

Name of unit	Type	Commander(s)	Location of service	Religion
Pitt's Irish Brigade	6 regiments of infantry with émigré officers	6 Franco-Irish colonels	Ireland, West Indies and Canada	Exclusively Catholic
Prince of Wales' Donegal Militia	Regiment of infantry	Col. Cmmdt. W. B. Conyngham, Viscount Clements	Nationwide: Donegal, Wexford and Cork	Mostly Catholic
Doneraile Yeomanry Corps	Mixed regiment of cavalry and infantry	Capt. Nicholas G. Evans	Doneraile, Cork	Mixed
2 nd Irish Fencible Cavalry	Regiment of cavalry	Col. Lord Glentworth	Nationwide: Limerick, Cavan, Meath and Cork	Mixed

The role of each formation in military strategy is one key difference between case studies. For example, the militia was raised to counter the invasion threat whilst the yeomanry and fencibles were formed for the internal security of Ireland. In some instances, religious identity is also a key differing characteristic. The commanders of the various regiments and corps will also be discussed, as their differing political affiliations, social standing and ambitions often directly influenced how a regiment or corps was raised and utilised, a notable example being the family tradition of Protestant defence amongst some Ascendancy colonels. The role of patronage in recruitment will also be explored.²⁰²

Within these regiments, the precise nature of the surviving records is variable, and details of certain periods or aspects of the regimental life may be sparse. Furthermore, the inherent bias of this material, written mostly by the Protestant Ascendancy and British politicians, must be borne in mind. Since the primary source material does not lend itself to a quantification of Irish participation in the British army, the goal of this thesis is to assess this material in a qualitative manner, considering the political, social and military contexts in which these communications arose and studying both the content and language of these

²⁰² Johnson-Liik, *History of the Irish parliament*, i, 136.

correspondences and records to gain insights into the factors shaping the experiences of Irishmen in the British service.

The main archival collections consulted for this thesis are those of the National Archives at Kew, London, and the National Library of Ireland, Dublin. The War Office and Home Office collections at the National Archives, Kew were of particular interest to Irish military and political matters. The National Library of Ireland holds a large range of state and personal papers also. The estate papers of many of the important Irish families who served in the Irish militia, yeomanry and fencibles are now held by the National Library of Ireland, such as the Killadoon (Clements) Papers of the Earls of Leitrim.²⁰³ An invaluable source of information on day-to-day military administration is the Kilmainham Papers collection, held by the National Library following the evacuation of the British army from the Royal Hospital Kilmainham in 1922.²⁰⁴ The French military archives, the Service historique de la Défense, Paris, provided detailed records of the various regiments of the Irish Brigade in the French service, both before and after the Revolution. Another relevant collection examined at the Service historique de la Défense were the invasion files for Ireland, ‘*l’expédition d’Irlande*’, for the years 1796 and 1798. The French archives offer a different perspective on events, allowing for an overall evaluation of how Ireland played a role in the politics and strategies of both Britain and France.

Contemporary newspaper articles provide useful additional information, not only about specific unit details, but also public opinion regarding the Irish regiments. However, the press was used for propaganda purposes, with some publications being more subjective than others. For example, the *London Gazette* is a reliable resource for military appointments and actions, while the *Freeman’s Journal* was initially founded as a Patriot newspaper but

²⁰³ Killadoon (Clements) Papers (N.L.I., Ms 36010-70).

²⁰⁴ Henry McAnally, ‘The Kilmainham Papers’ in *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, xvi (1937), pp 52-4.

became closely linked with Dublin Castle in the 1790s.²⁰⁵ As such the *Freeman's Journal* tended to report on positive aspects of the military in Ireland and the negative aspects of the disaffected. Conversely, the private communications of politicians and military officers are likely to offer a more accurate depiction of key events, as well as a wealth of information about day-to-day military life that would not be reported in the press.

Thesis structure

This thesis will consist of six chapters, one examining the political and strategic relevance of Ireland to Britain and France, one examining the Irish in the regular British army in the eighteenth century, and the remaining four chapters will be case studies of Irish units, and the men who served in them, during the French Revolutionary wars. Within each case study the history of the unit is examined chronologically from its establishment through to its disbandment.

The first chapter will discuss the role of Ireland in British and French politics and strategy, focusing on the national and international interplay between political decisions and military matters, to gain a better understanding of this interdependency of military and political affairs and to contextualise the experiences of individual units examined in the case studies that follow. The use of intelligence by Britain to actively maintain stability in Ireland, and correspondingly by France to incite rebellion, is explored through to primary source material from government officials in Ireland and Britain, as well as military commanders.

The second chapter will examine how the contribution of Irishmen to the British regular army developed over the course of the eighteenth century. Restrictions were placed on Catholics, and even Irish Protestants for a times, but covert recruitment still took place. This chapter explores how the army recruited Irishmen, how they were put to use, and how

²⁰⁵ F. M. Larkin, 'A great daily organ': *The Freeman's Journal*, 1763-1924' in *History Ireland*, xiv, no. 3 (2006), pp 44-49, at p. 44.

varying Irish identities came together in the regular army, as part of a unified British military identity.

The third chapter, and first case-study, examines the experiences of the Catholic Irish Brigade, whose officers continued the military tradition of the so-called 'Wild Geese'. The movement for, and opposition to, Catholic relief, particularly affected this formation. The distrust of the strongly conservative Protestant Ascendancy forced the brigade to serve far afield in the West Indies and Canada, from whence few returned, and provides a clear example of how different manifestations of Irish identity could come into conflict, with direct impacts on the experiences of Irish soldiers.

The second case-study explores the history of the Donegal Regiment of Militia, commanded by W.B. Conyngham from 1793 to 1796, and by Viscount Clements from 1796 until the Peace of Amiens and end of the French Revolutionary wars. Conyngham was a dynamic and improving member of the Ascendancy, while Clements represents a less traditional type of Ascendancy, as his family were relative newcomers to the nobility. As such, the Donegal Militia provided an opportunity for self-advancement for both commanders. In contrast to the Catholic Irish Brigade, this formation represents a more successful blending of Ascendancy and Irish Catholic identities, with a history of loyal service. Their success is contrasted with the failures of certain other militia formations and militia men, failures which illustrate the consequences of extreme Protestantism and anti-Catholicism amongst officers.

The Irish yeomanry and particularly the Doneraile Yeomanry Corps are examined in the fifth chapter. The role of the Protestant Ascendancy in military life is a key consideration when examining both the yeomanry as a whole and this particular corps. The motivations as to why an Irish gentleman might raise a corps, at his own considerable expense, will be examined. Viscount Doneraile represents the old Ascendancy and loyalism, with a long tradition of military service, and direct links to the Volunteers. The contrast between

Doneraile and Clements is particularly noteworthy, as it demonstrates that even within the Protestant Ascendancy identity there were variations and complexities that affected the experiences of men in the British service in different ways.

The final chapter investigates the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry regiment, which was mostly used as a mounted police force that was rotated around the country, yet also expected to resist a French invasion if it came. This formation was commanded by Lord Glentworth, whose participation in military life was not only an expression the old Ascendancy traditions of military service and loyalism, but also a means of enhancing his own status in society. The fencibles were more closely linked to the regular army than the militia or yeomanry, and were therefore regarded as more reliable and professional by military commanders. This chapter examines whether these opinions were accurate.

CHAPTER 1

IRELAND AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WARS: THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

The wider policies pursued by both British and French politicians in the late eighteenth-century had implications for Ireland, as well as the Irishmen in the British military service. Following the *levée en masse*, a form of nationwide conscription in France, numbers in the French army rose very rapidly.¹ As Esdaile notes, war was now associated with revolution and dramatic social and political change.² The allied nations had to increase their armed forces if they were to defeat the threat of Revolutionary France. This rising militarisation across Europe would drive Britain to raise more and more troops, to fight the French, as well as defend the British mainland and her overseas dominions.

Ireland, with its large Catholic population, would provide a source of manpower for the rapidly expanding army, as well as the navy. McDowell observes that Ireland was also feeding Britain during the wars, through mainly corn and flour exports.³ Infrastructure in Ireland had improved during the eighteenth-century, with the building of roads and canals, facilitating the transport of goods and the movement of troops.⁴ However, Ireland also occupied a strategic position at the flank of the British mainland, and required a large military garrison of 15,000 men, amounting to almost one third of Britain's military manpower in 1793, to maintain British authority on the island.⁵

¹ Holmes, *Redcoat*, p. 37; Anderson, *Daily life during the French Revolution*, p. 217.

² Esdaile, *Napoleon's Wars*, p. 533

³ McDowell, 'Ireland in the 18th century British Empire', in J. G. Barry (ed.), *Historical Studies IX* (Belfast, 1974), pp 49-63, at pp 59-62.

⁴ Johnson-Liik, *History of the Irish parliament*, i, 45.

⁵ Reid, *Armies of the Irish Rebellion 1798*, p. 12.

As highlighted in the previous chapter, the events of 1798 have tended to dominate Irish historical scholarship on this period, often with little regard to the broader context and the many Irishmen who served in the British military. In this chapter, French and British perceptions of key events such as the 1796 and 1798 invasion attempts are examined so that their effects on Irishmen serving in the British army may be better contextualised. Ireland's role in British military and political strategy, both as an unstable possession that needed to be secured and a recruiting ground for the British armed forces, is explored with reference to primary source material.

IRELAND IN FRENCH POLITICS AND STRATEGY

The origins of the French Revolutionary wars

The success of the American Revolution prompted similar desires for liberty in many French people.⁶ Funding the American war had weakened the French economy, and in 1789 this, combined with growing social discontent and food shortages, prompted the French lower classes to rise up against the aristocracy, clergy and Bourbon monarchy.⁷ Eventually open revolt broke out and on the 14 July 1789 the royal prison and arsenal of the Bastille in Paris was stormed.⁸ The French army was split; some embraced the revolution. Others, such as the Irish Brigade, remained loyal to the royalty.

These events were watched with increasing concern by neighbouring countries. In an effort to assert itself, and channel the violence and aggression of the revolutionaries against an external enemy, France declared war on Austria on 20 April 1792, Prussia joining the

⁶ Sweetman, *The Enlightenment and the Age of Revolution*, p. 1.

⁷ Holmes, *Redcoat*, p. 23.

⁸ Simon Schama, *Citizens: a chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York, 1989), pp 369-425, p. 399.

Austrians shortly afterwards.⁹ In August 1792 the French royal family were arrested and imprisoned and the Allied army marched towards Paris until it was defeated on 20 September at Valmy. This moment marked the first major victory of the revolutionaries. A new government, the National Convention, was formed and France was declared a republic. The Battle of Valmy is often regarded as a watershed moment in the history of Europe and the world, signifying the place where the French Republic was formed, and according to Cross, demonstrated how an external threat played an important role in uniting the French people.¹⁰ By successfully defending the fatherland, *la patrie*, the Republic asserted itself to its people, and the outside world. This new-found confidence spurred the revolution on with greater vigour and on 21 January 1793 Louis XVI was guillotined by order of the National Convention. This prompted the final breakdown of relations between France and the rest of its European neighbours, as Britain and Spain joined the coalition against France.

Franco-Irish connections before and during the French Revolution

Ireland had long maintained a cultural and military link with France, for several centuries before the sharp rupture of the Revolution. Many Irishmen had volunteered to serve in the armies of the French monarchy in the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries.¹¹ The most active period of Franco-Irish military history came during and after the Williamite Wars of the 1690s, where James II of England was forced into exile at the court of his cousin, Louis XIV of France.¹² With the king came a large number of Irish Catholics soldiers who, due to their religion, were now forbidden from bearing arms or serving in the British army. The so-called 'Wild Geese' saw themselves not as mercenaries, but rather as political and religious exiles,

⁹ Anderson, *Daily life during the French Revolution*, p. 14.

¹⁰ Schama, *Citizens*, pp 639-41; Geoffrey Best, *War and society in Revolutionary Europe, 1770-1870* (Leicester, 1982), p. 81; Sweetman, *The Enlightenment and the Age of Revolution*, p.1; Elizabeth Cross, 'The myth of the foreign enemy? The Brunswick Manifesto and the radicalization of the French Revolution' in *French History*, xxv, no. 2 (2011), pp 188-213, at p. 212.

¹¹ Éamon Ó Ciosáin, 'The Irish in French service before 1690' in Genet-Rouffiac and Murphy, *Franco-Irish military connections* (Dublin, 2009), pp 15-31.

¹² Nathalie Genet-Rouffiac, 'The Wild Geese in France: a French perspective' in Genet-Rouffiac and Murphy, *Franco-Irish military connections* (Dublin, 2009), pp 32-54, at pp 32-3.

who would one day return to their homeland.¹³ These men would serve in the French army for over a century, earning a well-respected reputation amongst the armed forces of the Bourbon monarchy. In addition to military migration, there were also strong cultural ties between the countries. The penal laws prevented Irish Catholic priests from training in Ireland, and so many went abroad to the Irish Colleges that had been established in Europe from the sixteenth to eighteenth-centuries, including the Irish College in Paris.

The Revolution put considerable pressure on traditional Franco-Irish ties. Some Franco-Irish embraced the revolution, while others remained loyal to the monarchy. As well as the Irish in France, the Revolution influenced those in Ireland who desired similar regime changes, such as the Society of United Irishmen, who desired an independent Irish republic modelled on the French system. As such, Ireland presented an opportunity for the French Republic to destabilise British authority in its closest territorial possession, and potentially weaken its grip on other possessions.

The role of the United Irishmen, and in particular that of one of their leaders, Theobald Wolfe Tone, in seeking French assistance for an Irish rebellion has been well documented in the historiography of post-independence Ireland, with a proliferation of literature marking the bicentennial of the 1798 rebellion.¹⁴ The literature often views these events from a solely Irish perspective, yet it is important to consider them within the wider context of French political and military strategies also.

French foreign policy and support for insurgency

After an initial move towards spreading revolution following military conquest, the French government decided to assist individual revolutions that would also benefit French strategy,

¹³ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁴ *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone. Compiled and arranged by William Theobald Wolfe Tone*, ed. Thomas Bartlett (Dublin, 1998); Sylvie Kleinman, ‘‘Un brave de plus’’: Theobald Wolfe Tone, alias Adjutant-General Smith: French officer and Irish patriot adventurer, 1796-8’ in Genet-Rouffiac and Murphy, *Franco-Irish military connections* (Dublin, 2009), pp 163-88.

whilst France began an energetic series of territorial expansions.¹⁵ Anglophobia in France increased as Britain attempted to support anti-republican revolts in parts of France such as Quiberon Bay and La Vendée.¹⁶ Invading Britain or Ireland would avenge these incidents as well as damage British authority and morale, and in the case of Ireland potentially trigger a rebellion. The extensive files on the ‘Expedition to Ireland’ at the French military archives in Paris, la Service Historique de la Défense, includes a detailed memorandum, instructing how to create an insurgency, or ‘chouannerie’, in England.¹⁷ The goal was explicitly stated as being in response to the British attempts at instigating revolt in the heart of the French Republic.

The memorandum conveys very strong confidence, what would actually turn out to be overconfidence, in the eagerness of the local population to rise in revolt. The sailors working in Liverpool and Bristol were to be roused into rebellion, as were the manufacturers in towns and cities such as Manchester and Sheffield.¹⁸ It was even suggested that the students of Oxford and Cambridge could be convinced to rise against their professors, after an appeal to their sense of democracy and law. Similar claims were made about the military. The memorandum described how guerrilla warfare would demoralise the British army, and force soldiers to desert; another letter advised on where and how this was to be carried out.¹⁹ The letter assured that a large part of the navy and army were Irish (a reasonably accurate statement) and therefore amenable to a French intervention (not as accurate an assumption).

Overall, French foreign policy regarding insurgency in Britain and Ireland demonstrates an overconfidence in Irish rebelliousness. This overconfidence parallels the claims of Tone and his fellow United Irishmen, which may indicate that French policy in

¹⁵ Hugh Gough, ‘Total war? Revolutionary France and United Irish strategy in the 1790s’ in Genet-Rouffiac and Murphy, *Franco-Irish military connections* (Dublin, 2009), pp 150-62, at p.151.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 152-3.

¹⁷ Instructions pour une chouannerie en Angleterre, 1796 (Service historique de la défense, Vincennes, Paris (S.H.D.), l’Expédition d’Irlande 1796, B 11/1).

¹⁸ Extrait des instructions du Citoyen [no name], 1796 (S.H.D., B 11/1).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

these matters was being largely led by the exaggerated rhetoric of the United Irishmen, rather than reliable intelligence. This lack of reliable intelligence would have a significant effect on the coming invasion efforts.

The expeditions to Ireland: 1796 and 1798

Lazare Hoche, the talented French general who had suppressed the revolt in La Vendée, urged for an invasion of the British Isles and was joined in these opinions by Wolfe Tone, who had recently arrived in secret in Paris. They convinced the new French government, the Directory, that an invasion of Ireland would be advantageous to the Republic and plans were begun in 1796. French troops would land and assist local rebels to create an insurgency against the British rulers.²⁰ The army for the Irish expedition was ordered to muster at Brest, which offered the most direct route from France to Ireland. The size of the invasion force of 1796, numbering around 15000 men, and the fact that the expedition was led by Hoche, one of France's most talented generals, indicates that Ireland was initially considered quite important in French politics and strategy. The 'Expedition to Ireland' files detail the preparations of '*l'Armée d'Irlande*' at Brest for both the attempted invasion of 1796 and the later 1798 expedition.²¹

In August 1796 Hoche accepted, 'with pleasure,' the command of the Irish invasion force.²² Having risen from the rank of sergeant to general in only four years, Hoche embodied the dynamic military patriotism of the new republic.²³ The expedition offered Hoche a great opportunity for glory. A successful invasion of Ireland, and perhaps even Britain, would position Hoche as the preeminent French general, ahead of his rival,

²⁰ D. R. Come, 'French threat to British shores, 1793-1798' in *Military Affairs*, xvi, no. 4 (1952), pp. 174-88, at p. 180.

²¹ l'Expédition d'Irlande 1796, 1798 (S.H.D., B 11/1-2).

²² Hoche au directoire executif, 6 Aug. 1796 (S.H.D., B 11/1).

²³ R. B. McDowell, 'Revolution and the union 1794-1800' in Moody and Vaughan, Moody and W. E. Vaughan (eds), *A new history of Ireland: vol. IV Eighteenth century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford, 1986), pp 339-73, at p. 350.

Napoleon Bonaparte.²⁴ This close association of military and political ambition was not unique to Hoche and his fellow French officers, the colonels of regiments in Ireland often displayed the same ambition for self-advancement, although on a more localised scale than the rapid social and military climbing on display in France.

The radical reformers who sought change in Ireland needed to convince the new French Republic that an Irish expedition was a worthwhile venture, and this is reflected in an extensive letter entitled '*Quelque reflexions sur l'Irlande*,' ('Some reflections on Ireland') written in September 1796.²⁵ The letter described how Ireland, perhaps more than any other country, was ready for a similar revolution.²⁶ The strong connection between the French and Irish peoples was outlined, their linked military tradition and how the French were well perceived by the Irish. However, Hugh Gough argues that many Irish people living in Paris wished to distance themselves from the radical politics of the French republicans and in particular their anti-religious policies.²⁷ It may also be emphasised that while the French and Irish did have a long military tradition, many of those Franco-Irish émigrés had moved back to Ireland or Britain since the Revolution and had offered their services to the British crown, a fact that this letter does not mention. This transfer of military loyalty from France to Britain will be examined in the following chapter, as well as in the case study of the Irish Brigade in the British service. The Irishmen in the British service were not as ready for revolt as this letter claimed, giving an indication of how the older Franco-Irish tradition of the Wilde Geese was giving way to the newer tradition of Irishmen serving loyally, and dependably, in the British military.

The author of the letter claimed that the invaders would have to be morally resolute, as well as physically strong, in order to ensure French victory and Irish liberty. The letter is

²⁴ Marianne Elliott, 'The role of Ireland in French war strategy, 1796-1798' in Hugh Gough and David Dickson (eds), *Ireland and the French Revolution* (Dublin, 1990), pp 202-19, at p. 206.

²⁵ '*Quelque reflexions sur l'Irlande*', 5 Sept. 1796 (S.H.D., B 11/1).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Gough, 'Total war?', p. 151.

unsigned but judging by the earnest and even hyperbolic language, combined with a relatively well-informed knowledge of Ireland, it would appear to have been written by a native Irishman, most likely United Irishman and perhaps Wolfe Tone himself, as it fits with his desire to secure French aid for an Irish revolution. The claim that Ireland was ready for revolt was to be proven correct in subsequent years yet the author seems overconfident about how much the French would be welcomed by the Irish, and how many Irish people would actually take up arms against their rulers. This overconfidence in the Irish people's willingness to revolt was to be a major weakness of United Irish strategy in the coming years.

Just as the constant pressure of external warfare kept attention away from internal problems in the fledgling republic, the expedition may also be viewed as a distraction for France at the expense of Britain's position and security, under the guise of bringing liberty to an oppressed people. A leaflet entitled '*Hymes et chants patriotique*' provided a song to rouse the troops of the invasion force, encouraging them to fight for their fatherland, *la patrie*, and to bring liberty to the oppressed British, while the Irish were described as ready to break the chains that bound them to Britain.²⁸ These songs were designed to inspire the Frenchmen, and to convince them of the worthiness of their expedition. As the fleet made ready to sail, proclamations were written up to the people of Ireland, announcing that the French did not bring war to Ireland, but rather the opportunity for a free and independent government. England had for too long held its 'despotic yoke' over her neighbours, and France would be Ireland's liberator.²⁹ These messages, clearly propaganda, illustrate how the French sought to portray the Irish expedition as a campaign to liberate an oppressed people from tyranny. In Ireland, the United Irishmen portrayed the French as heroic liberators, but Marianne Elliott claims France was simply being 'pragmatic' whilst fighting 'a bitter war at

²⁸ 'Hymnes et chants patriotiques par les officiers de l'armée expéditionnaire', 1796 (S.H.D., B 11/1).

²⁹ Proclamation aux irlandais, 24 Oct. 1796 (S.H.D., B 11/1).

home and abroad.’³⁰

The 1796 expedition, which left Brest in mid-December, did not go to plan, as the Royal Navy’s superiority made the crossing very difficult. Even when the fleet evaded the British blockade and arrived in Bantry Bay, West Cork, in Christmas 1796, extremely bad weather scattered the fleet and prevented the invasion force from landing, eventually forcing its return to France.³¹ The shock of the invasion that almost happened spurred the authorities to increase defences in Ireland, both in terms of men and coastal fortifications, which made the possibility of any further landings more difficult.

Despite the failure at Bantry Bay, Hoche remained convinced that an invasion of Ireland could achieve great results. He urged the men not to give up hope, and argued that it was only the weather that had prevented their success, and that they would soon receive new orders to bring the fight to the English once more. Then, Hoche was reassigned to the Rhine front and interest in an Irish expedition lessened, especially after Hoche died in 1797.

A new expedition was launched in 1798, after the unexpected news of the uprising in Ireland reached France.³² It is important to note that the uprising and the subsequent French landings were not organized in parallel, indicating an apparent breakdown in communications between the United Irishmen in France and at home. Another talented general, Jean Joseph Humbert, led the expedition, landing at Killala Bay, County Mayo in August 1798 where the Republic of Connaught was briefly established.³³ However, after a number of early successes, the small French force was defeated by a determined counter campaign by the British forces, including many Irish regiments.³⁴ The French force was only a third of the size of the 1796 force, which demonstrates the Directory’s loss of interest in an

³⁰ Elliott, ‘The role of Ireland in French war strategy’, p. 202.

³¹ Gough, ‘Total war?’, p. 155.

³² Elliott, ‘The role of Ireland in French war strategy’, p. 211.

³³ Gough, ‘Total war?’, p. 156.

³⁴ Henry McAnally, ‘The government forces engaged at Castlebar in 1798’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, iv, no. 16 (1945), pp 316-31.

Irish expedition in the last two years. The French had hoped for more Irish support but the rebel movement was mostly spent after their uprising earlier that summer. This outcome indicates the disconnection between the revolutionary ideals of the United Irishmen and the majority of the people of Ireland.

No further landings were made after 1798, but the French government and, later Napoleon, did consider the possibility of another expedition, yet these plans were never carried out. This was due to the superiority of the Royal Navy, logistical and financial problems and France gradually became less interested in the difficult challenge an Irish expedition posed.³⁵ Added to this was the capture of Wolfe Tone in late 1798, which represented the loss of the most vigorous proponent, in the higher levels of French politics and military planning, of an expedition to Ireland.

The role of Ireland in French military strategy

It is clear from the primary source material that Ireland was not the sole objective in French political and military strategy, but rather a piece of an overall strategy to destabilise British authority and perhaps force Britain to exit the war. This was a common theme in French policy towards Ireland over the centuries; Irish affairs were only of interest to France when the opportunity to damage British interests in Ireland presented itself. Otherwise, France had a relatively ambivalent attitude towards Ireland. The invasion of Bantry had been envisaged as part of a series of landings in Britain and Ireland but in the end these plans did not succeed, with more bad weather and the Royal Navy preventing subsequent landings. The exception was the Fishguard landing in Wales in 1797, the last land invasion of mainland Britain, and a very small expedition that was easily defeated by local British forces.³⁶ There is little evidence that the French Republic was very interested in improving the lot of the Irish people, beyond the immediate strategic advantages and the propaganda value of separating

³⁵ Gough, 'Total war?', p.156.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 154.

Ireland from Britain. France had multiple armies in multiple theatres and therefore plans for grand campaigns of conquest took precedence over any plans for a diversionary landing in Ireland; indicating that while Ireland offered a useful opportunity to France, it was far from an essential part of French political and military strategy.

Marianne Elliott claims that there was a ‘serious misconception’ amongst the French regarding popular support for revolution in Ireland.³⁷ The Ascendency clearly would not have welcomed the arrival of French republicans. The secular ideals of the Republic also presented a potential problem for Ireland, as many Catholics feared the church would be suppressed in Ireland as it had been in France. Furthermore, if a French expedition force had landed, it would have expected financial support from the United Irishmen. How the United Irishmen, and Ireland in general, would have been able to reimburse the French army is unknown.³⁸ This is an aspect of the expeditions that has often been overlooked, yet would have had serious consequences.

The reality of Ireland’s role in French military strategy was markedly different to perceptions in subsequent centuries. In the century after the rebellion the United Irishmen began to be regarded in popular thought as ‘noble heroes’ despite being denounced for their violent radicalism by others, including Daniel O’Connell, the great proponent of Catholic Emancipation.³⁹ The United Irishmen became the focal point of Irish nationalism, and their actual political doctrines of a co-existence with Britain were ignored by the newer generations of Irish revolutionaries in the later nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries.⁴⁰ This has been particularly the case in post-independence Ireland, with Bantry Bay portrayed as one of the great ‘missed opportunities’ in Irish history and Tone the founder of the Irish nationalism. By never actually experiencing French occupation, the United Irishmen and

³⁷ Elliott, ‘The role of Ireland in French war strategy’, p. 214.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

³⁹ Marianne Elliott, *Partners in revolution: the United Irishmen and France* (Yale, 1982), p. 367.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 369-71.

their French allies were retained as part of a ‘romantic vision’ of Ireland by later generation of Irish people.⁴¹ This had the added effect that most historians focused on the rebels and their tragic failure, rather than on the far greater number of Irishmen who served in the British army during this period.

IRELAND IN BRITISH POLITICS AND STRATEGY

Government perceptions of disaffection

With the outbreak of war in Europe, the British government needed to secure Ireland against internal and external threats. As such, the period of the wars presented a number of political challenges for the British and Irish administrations to overcome, many related to disaffection amongst the Irish population. In the latter half of the eighteenth-century the argument for, and against, Catholic relief was often used in political manoeuvring. Some Irish Tories favoured strong ties with Britain whilst Irish Whigs favoured a more independent and liberal approach, supporting parliamentary reform and Catholic Emancipation.⁴² The Tories’ response, in both Britain (where William Pitt the Younger’s government was in power) and Ireland was to grant certain concessions so as to remove support from the Whigs.

Pitt’s positive attitude to Catholic relief, which undercut the Whigs’ position on the subject, is an example of this behaviour and will be further examined in the case study of the Irish Brigade. Pitt recognised the need for a united front against Revolutionary France, and that Roman Catholics should not be excluded from this alliance of ‘lovers of order and good government.’⁴³ His pragmatic motivations may be described as open to Catholic Relief, rather than being especially pro-Catholic; he was not motivated by altruism but recognised

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 372.

⁴² McDowell, ‘Revolution and the union’, p. 351.; R. B. McDowell, ‘Parliamentary independence, 1782-9’ in Moody and Vaughan (eds), *A new history of Ireland: vol. IV Eighteenth century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford, 1986), pp 265-88, at p. 285.

⁴³ Geoghegan, *The Irish Act of Union*, p.3.

the benefits Catholic Relief offered for military recruitment and national stability.

The king himself was often an obstacle to further Catholic relief, believing it contradicted his coronation oath to protect the Protestant faith.⁴⁴ He was reminded of this duty during the debate over the Act of Union by Lord Clare, Chancellor of the Irish House of Lords, who evidently did not wish to see any Catholics gaining a foothold in Irish politics. This would be an attitude shared by many Irish politicians, and would manifest itself in both the opposition of Catholic recruitment and the establishment of the mostly Protestant Irish yeomanry. Anti-Catholic sentiments were also shared by some of the British public, which sometimes led to violence. The most extreme example of this was the Gordon Riots in London in 1780, which followed a relief act for Catholics and resulted in nearly 300 deaths.⁴⁵ Some British politicians recognised the importance of maintaining Catholic loyalty rather than ensuring control over the Catholic population. However, politicians who seemed too pro-Catholic also suffered. An example of this was Earl Fitzwilliam, a lord lieutenant of Ireland known for his general openness to Catholic Relief, who as a result lost favour with many politicians and was recalled from office.⁴⁶

Earl Camden, Fitzwilliam's replacement as Lord Lieutenant, kept a close correspondence with the Duke of Portland, and many of their correspondences are recorded in the Home Office Records at the National Archives, filed under the title 'Private, secret and confidential.'⁴⁷ A letter from Camden to Portland in January 1796 indicates that at this point in the wars, the main concern for internal security was Defenderism, as the United Irishmen were initially mostly a political group. Camden warned Portland that the pro-Catholic Defenders claimed 'the utmost attention of government,' and the society had spread to Ulster, and were taking 'great pains' to swear 'all descriptions of persons' into their ranks, as

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁵ Herlihy, *The Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 26.

⁴⁶ McDowell, 'Revolution and the union', p. 345.

⁴⁷ 'Private, secret and confidential' 1796, Irish Administration (The National Archives, Kew, London (T.N.A.), Home Officer Papers (H.O.) 100/62).

well as corresponding with the United Irishmen.

Camden's correspondence also indicates his position on Catholic Relief. He wrote that Henry Grattan had made a proposal that the Irish government 'pursue such measures, as may tend to improve and amend the condition of the poorer class of people.'⁴⁸ This certainly refers to Catholics, as they were in the majority in the lower class of Irish society, but may also refer to poor Protestants and Dissenters. The amendment was objected to, on the grounds that it was unwise to propose such improvements 'which it might be impossible to realise.'⁴⁹ It was claimed that England would not enter into any such discussion during the war and Camden assured Portland that the matter had not received much support. Camden was evidently taking a harder line towards Catholic Emancipation than his predecessor Fitzwilliam. As this thesis demonstrates, this push for Catholic Relief characterised British-Irish politics in the late eighteenth-century, and had a direct effect on the Irishmen in the British service. Irish Catholics swelled the numbers of the armed forces, as the British military as a whole responded to the rising militarisation across Europe, but often the Catholic cause was used as a bargaining tool in the political debates in Westminster and Dublin.⁵⁰

However, Camden also warned that the 'Protestants of Armagh' had been committing acts of the 'greatest outrage and barbarity against their Catholic neighbours.'⁵¹ Camden was evidently not strictly anti-Catholic; he did not wish to see unlawfulness in Ireland, even if Catholics were the victims. These 'Protestants of Armagh' may be of the Church of Ireland, or they may possibly be Presbyterians, Camden's use of the phrase is unclear. The Presbyterians had presented a problem to government, with their strong sense of identity, but their disaffection manifested in marches and protests for their rights rather than

⁴⁸ Camden to Portland, 22 Jan. 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/21).

⁴⁹ Camden to Portland, 22 Jan. 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/15-9).

⁵⁰ See Chapter 2 for more on the 'Catholic Question' and Irishmen in the British service.

⁵¹ Camden to Portland, 22 Jan. 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/17-8).

open rebellion or challenges to the authorities.

Camden informed Portland that he had sanctioned questionable military operations against civilians, mentioning the conduct of Henry Lawes Luttrell, Earl Carhampton, whom he had ordered into Connaught the previous year. Carhampton had taken a very harsh approach in quelling any disaffection in the province, and as Camden delicately put it to Portland, ‘did not confine himself to the strict rules of the law.’⁵² Camden defended Carhampton’s action, stating that they were necessary given the state of the country at the time. Camden states that he was considering proposing an act authorising similar conduct if the situation required it, and thereby cleared Carhampton of any charges of misconduct.

This strict approach to maintaining stability was also illustrated by the passing of the Insurrection Act in early 1796. This act permitted the Lord Lieutenant to declare martial law in an area deemed to be in a state of insurrection.⁵³ The passing of the act demonstrated that the authorities were aware that an insurrection was possible and were willing to go to great lengths to prevent or suppress any dissent. The act gave the military more power and influence and allowed for harsher suppression of secret societies.⁵⁴ Yet ultimately, the strict approach to disaffection that would define the military in Ireland in the 1790s would not prevent insurrection in 1798.

The use of intelligence networks to monitor subversives

Dublin Castle also operated an informal intelligence network around Ireland, with many paid informants. In July 1796 Edward Cooke, civil under-secretary at Dublin Castle, wrote to his superior, Thomas Pelham, enclosing a large number of intelligence report that illustrate how unstable Ireland was at this time.⁵⁵ According to one report, the Catholics of Connaught

⁵² Camden to Portland, 22 Jan. 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/16).

⁵³ Portland to Camden, 16 Mar. 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/64-6).

⁵⁴ Bartlett, ‘Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion: Ireland, 1793-1803’, p. 264.

⁵⁵ Cooke to Pelham, 20 July 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/133-45).

‘burned for revenge’ following Carhampton’s harsh actions.⁵⁶ These intelligence documents also reported the rapid spread of Orangism in the north of Ireland, describing tensions between the United Irishmen and the loyalist Orange Boys.⁵⁷ Reports illustrate how the United Irishmen began to attract the attention of Dublin Castle as the year progressed; the group was now planning to seize government arms magazines, though the letters claimed that they would ‘never dare to act decisively till they are aided by the French.’⁵⁸ Interestingly, the mostly Catholic militia was believed to be ‘ripe for revolt.’⁵⁹ However, these fears would prove unfounded, with the vast majority of militiamen remaining loyal to Britain throughout the wars. This will be discussed further in the case study of the Donegal Militia. It was not just the militia that was suspected by politicians; in 1797 Dundas wrote to Camden informing him that he was reluctant to send any regular regiments to Ireland at that time, as they were actually mostly made up of Irish recruits and Dundas believed that Camden would ‘perhaps not conceive them to be the best materials for sending to Ireland.’⁶⁰

Camden relayed to Portland a detailed report in August 1796 on the ominous political and social state of Ireland.⁶¹ Through ‘secret intelligence’ he had learned that the United Irishmen planned to instigate an insurrection and ‘procure French assistance.’⁶² Camden also again referred to the newly formed Orangemen as a party who operated a ‘system of terror’ against Catholics. He promised to use ‘every possible exertion’ to prevent further outrages by Dissenters against Catholics, to avert further agitating the Catholics into insurrection.⁶³ He also told Portland that only he and his fellow British ministers could decide whether a French invasion was likely, as his attention was focused on internal Irish affairs, and that the possibility of such an expedition was giving ‘energy and vigour’ to the

⁵⁶ Enclosed letter, Cooke to Pelham, 20 July 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/137).

⁵⁷ Enclosed letter, Cooke to Pelham, 20 July 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/135).

⁵⁸ Enclosed letter, Cooke to Pelham, 20 July 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/135).

⁵⁹ Enclosed letter, Cooke to Pelham, 20 July 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/135).

⁶⁰ Dundas to Camden, 22 Apr. 1797 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/69 ff 218-9).

⁶¹ Camden to Portland, 6 Aug. 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/153-63).

⁶² Camden to Portland, 6 Aug. 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/154).

⁶³ In this case, Camden specifically identifies the group as Dissenters. Camden to Portland, 6 Aug. 1796 (T.N.A., H.O. 100/62/154-7).

exertions of the disaffected.⁶⁴

The militarisation of Ireland

The seriousness with which the British government considered Ireland's stability is illustrated by the large commitments made to militarising Ireland at the outset of the wars at which time the Irish Establishment stood at 15,000 men. In March 1793 the Home Secretary, Henry Dundas, informed the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the Earl of Westmorland, that the Establishment was to be increased to 17,000 men 'to be kept constantly in Ireland.'⁶⁵ The Establishment was ordered to be further augmented to 19,000 towards the end of 1793.⁶⁶ This commitment demonstrates that the British government was keen to secure Ireland and also to utilise its manpower. The money needed for such a large garrison also indicates that the decision was not taken lightly, and as troops were paid by the country they were stationed in, the burden of paying for such a large number would fall heavily on the authorities in Ireland.

As a result of the Catholic Relief Acts, more Catholics could be recruited and an Irish militia was established in 1793 to defend Ireland from invasion and to make regular troops available for overseas service.⁶⁷ This was supplemented in 1794 by fencible regiments, which were raised for the duration of the conflict and restricted to home defence duties, and later by the Irish yeomanry. The yeomanry were tasked with counter-insurgency duties, while the militia were expected to perform counter-invasion duties. Ireland was also required to provide cavalry regiments for foreign service.⁶⁸ The rising demand for regiments may be seen in a letter from Dundas to Portland in February 1795, where Dundas urged that the regular regiments that were being raised in Ireland be sent from the county as soon as

⁶⁴ Camden to Portland, 6 Aug. 1796 (T.N.A., H.O. 100/62/158).

⁶⁵ Dundas to Westmorland, 24 Mar. 1793 (National Library of Ireland, Dublin (N.L.I.), Kilmainham Papers (K.P.) MS 1002/86).

⁶⁶ Dundas to Westmorland, 25 Nov. 1793 (N.L.I., K.P. MS 1002/127).

⁶⁷ See Chapter 4 for further details.

⁶⁸ Dundas to Westmorland, 5 Apr. 1793 (N.L.I., K.P. MS 1002/92).

they were complete, in order to maintain not only their cohesion and stability in Ireland but also to make them immediately available for service in the West Indies and Gibraltar.⁶⁹

The outbreak of war in 1793 prompted the raising of many new regiments in the British army, and these took their place on the British and Irish establishments alongside older regiments, many of which had already been in service for a century. Three new cavalry regiments and about thirteen new infantry regiments were established in the early 1790s.⁷⁰ The sharp rise in the number of regiments may be explained by both the growing militarisation of Britain and Ireland in general, and also in the rise in Catholic recruitment that took place following the relief acts of the early 1790s. After several years the high number of regiments was deemed to be unwieldy and all regiments that bore a numerical title above one hundred, such as the 124th and 134th Regiments of Foot, were disbanded and the remaining regiments were augmented with new battalions from these drafted men.

In order to promote recruitment, officers who raised sufficient men would be eligible for promotion, encouraged 'to extraordinary exertions by a speedy prospect of preferment.'⁷¹ The recruit would receive no more than ten guineas as an enlistment incentive, known as the bounty; the rest of the £15 paid for each man would go on expenses.⁷² Ten guineas was a very sizeable sum in the late eighteenth-century; the National Archives' currency convertor estimates this amount to have been worth about £320 in modern money.⁷³ Whilst there was a separate Irish pound to the British pound, the amount may be estimated to be roughly comparable. With a garrison of 19,000 this would have amounted to £285,000 (£9.1 million in modern money) for just the recruitment cost, not including the regular upkeep cost. This considerable investment, which is often not discussed in either the military or political histories of the period, demonstrates the vital position of Ireland in British strategy. Clearly

⁶⁹ Dundas to Portland, 13 Feb. 1795 (T.N.A., H.O. 30/1 ff 200-6).

⁷⁰ Murphy, *The Irish Brigades*, pp 106-63.

⁷¹ Circular to infantry colonels from the War Office, 1 November 1793 (N.L.I., K.P., MS 1002/130).

⁷² Circular to infantry colonels from the War Office, 11 November 1793 (N.L.I., K.P. MS 1002/130).

⁷³ National Archives currency convertor (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency>) (21 June 2013).

the government wished to attract as many recruits as possible, as quickly as possible, in response to France's *levée en masse*, and Ireland provided an excellent opportunity for recruitment.

The escalating war presented a greater need for matériel as well as manpower. John King, Permanent Home Secretary, wrote to the Commissioners of Transport, in April 1795, replying to the news that there were only 1,500 muskets in the Irish government stores and despite employing 'all the artificers in Ireland' they were unable to supply more than 1,000 to 1,200 more muskets per month.⁷⁴ King assured that 'a supply of arms will be sent over from England.'⁷⁵ This gives an indication of the increasing pressure that Irish industry was under to try and maintain its armed forces.

As well as increasing in size, the army needed to improve and modernize, as illustrated by a letter from Portland to Camden, in May 1795, indicating royal approbation for the establishment of a Medical Staff and Commissariat in Ireland.⁷⁶ This decision enabled the army to better supply and equip the various armed forces of the Irish Establishment, whilst regulations for the feeding and equipping of the armed forces were outlined by William Windham, the new Secretary at War, to Thomas Pelham, the new Chief Secretary for Ireland, in May 1795.⁷⁷ 'Good bread, made of good marketable wheat' was ordered for the men, as was 'good old meadow hay' for the horses.⁷⁸ These measures would have ensured an increase in the quality of troops, so that the army could operate more efficiently. However, in late 1795 Camden wrote to Portland, expressing concern over the calibre of the men being sent to secure Ireland.⁷⁹ Camden urged that the troops destined for Ireland were 'fit for immediate service, for I am of the opinion that this country cannot be kept in a state of

⁷⁴ John King to the Commissioners of Transport, 20 April 1795 (N.L.I., K.P., MS 1003/57).

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Portland to Camden, 14 May 1795 (N.L.I., K.P., MS 1003/63).

⁷⁷ Windham to Pelham, 12 May 1795 (N.L.I., K.P., MS 1003/69).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Camden to Portland, 29 Dec 1795 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/60/3-5).

security without a sufficient force.’⁸⁰ This may indicate that the growing level of warfare in Europe was forcing the British army to raise regiments very quickly, without time for adequate training; this was a problem encountered by many armies during this period.

The garrison continued to increase rapidly; projections for 1796 estimated that 22,188 men would be required, at a cost of just over £659,687.⁸¹ This sum equates to just under 37 million pounds in modern money.⁸² The Irish parliament would have been responsible for the upkeep of the garrison and as a result, prior to the Act of Union in 1801, Dublin Castle was almost bankrupted by the cost of the war and the vast increase in the armed forces in Ireland.⁸³ Again, the cost of such measures indicates the level of commitment that the authorities, both military and civilian, were willing to make. Graph 1., based on document from the Adjutant General’s office entitled ‘Return of the effective men in the British army from the 1st January 1793 to the 1st January 1806’, gives an indication of where the armed forces of Britain were deployed.⁸⁴

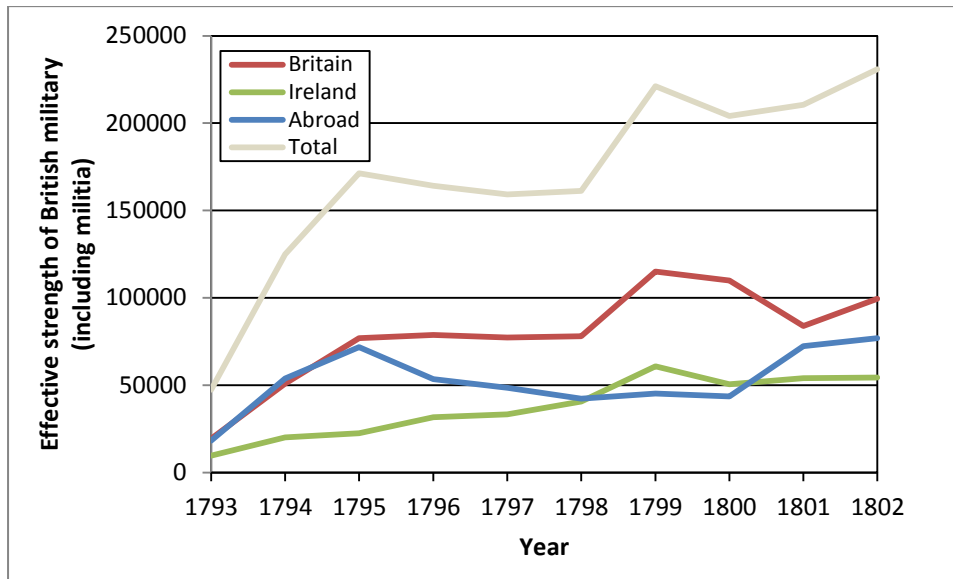
⁸⁰ Camden to Portland, 29 Dec 1795 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/60/3-5).

⁸¹ Proposed establishment for the army in Ireland for the year 1796, 5 Jan 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/60/7).

⁸² National Archives currency convertor (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency>) (21 June 2013).

⁸³ Bartlett, ‘Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion: Ireland, 1793-1803’, p. 247.

⁸⁴ Return of the effective men in the British army from the 1st January 1793 to the 1st January 1806, Adj. Gen. Office, 17 Dec. 1806 (T.N.A., W.O., 1/903/f33). For a full transcript, see Appendix 1.



Graph 1. Deployment locations for effective strength of the British army, 1793-1802

(T.N.A., W.O., 1/903/f33)

As the graph illustrates, the Irish Establishment was consistently augmented from 1793, reaching a height in post-rebellion 1799, before levelling off as stability returned. The drop-off in numbers overseas, which does not accompany any rise in numbers in Britain or Ireland, suggests a large amount of men left the service, either voluntarily or more likely due to the hardships of overseas service in the West Indies and colonial postings. Later overseas deployment closely mirrored a drop-off in numbers in Britain, but not so closely in Ireland, which suggests that most of the manpower was redistributed from Britain to overseas, with the Irish Establishment mostly retained. It is important to note that this is based on the effective strength that the British military actually possessed, rather than the established numbers projected for each area of deployment.

Furthermore this data does not include information on the yeomanry of Ireland, nor the Volunteers and yeomanry cavalry of Britain; which would add greatly to these figures. The established numbers of the Irish yeomanry are summarised in the table below (Table

1.1), based on the established numbers in 1803.⁸⁵ This again indicates how Ireland became increasingly militarised in the late eighteenth-century and show this militarisation continued when hostilities resumed in 1803.

Irish yeomanry numbers in 1803	
Cavalry	10277
Infantry	64756
Total	75033

Table 1.1: Established strength of the Irish yeomanry, December 1803⁸⁶

In 1796 the Duke of York introduced a number of reforms aimed at improving the professionalism of the British armed forces, both on and off the battlefield.⁸⁷ In September 1796 Portland wrote to Camden, directing him to adopt such reforms in Ireland; in a departure from earlier recruitment-based promotion incentives, officers would be required to serve a specific term before advancing to the next rank.⁸⁸ This was to ensure that officers had a certain amount of experience in a particular rank before attaining a higher rank with added responsibilities, despite earlier incitements for rapid promotion. These steps towards modernisation, along with the admittance of Catholics into the ranks, demonstrate the practical perspective of military commanders faced with the serious threat posed by the large armies of Revolutionary France.

British perceptions of the invasion threats

The possibility of France using Ireland as an invasion route to Britain had always been a cause for concern for the British authorities in Ireland. In late January 1793, only two days

⁸⁵ *List of the volunteers and yeomanry corps of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1804), pp 71-114. For a full list of yeomanry corps in Ireland, see Appendix 3.

⁸⁶ *List of the volunteers and yeomanry corps of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1804), p. 114.

⁸⁷ J. H. Macleod, 'The Duke of York's plans for the Army' in *Huntington Library Quarterly*, ix, no. 1 (1945), pp 95-100, at pp 97-8.

⁸⁸ Portland to Camden, Sept. 1796 (N.L.I., K.P., MS 1004/45); Circular to infantry colonels from the War Office, 1 November 1793 (N.L.I., K.P., MS 1002/130).

before the declaration of war, Lieutenant General Flower Mocher, second in command to the commander-in-chief, wrote to the then Lord Lieutenant, Westmorland, informing him that ‘preparatory measures’ were already being drawn up in case of invasion.⁸⁹ The following February, a letter from Mocher to Hobart, the Chief Secretary at the time, warned that an invasion was likely to take place before long.⁹⁰ The Lord Lieutenant also ordered that officers based on the coast ‘be extremely alert upon their posts.’⁹¹

Coastal defences were key to the security of the island. The construction of such defences would have been costly, illustrating the great importance that the British authorities placed on Irish stability. The western coast of Ireland, from Waterford in the south, clockwise up to Lough Foyle in County Derry, provided many sheltered bays for an enemy landing, and as such needed to be protected.⁹² A report on Cork harbour in 1793 stated that three companies of infantry were needed at Howard’s Redoubt, Spike Island needed to be garrisoned and a road needed to be laid down to Carlisle Fort.⁹³ A Mr Robert Fitzgerald owned the land at Carlisle Fort and had granted permission for the road on the condition that the Board signed leases for it. This demonstrates the authorities’ aim to maintain good relations with the locals, rather than simply commandeering the land for military use. The building of defences also meant a boost to the local economy as it brought employment for labourers and craftsmen and patronage for local businesses.⁹⁴ Even after the construction was completed, the men manning the defences would continue to patronise local businesses. However, Oxley notes that although wars stimulated the Irish economy, they ‘also led to inflation and resulted in the squeezing out of local demand.’⁹⁵ Relationships between military units and the people of the localities they served in are an important consideration

⁸⁹ Mocher to Westmorland, 30 Jan. 1793 (N.L.I., K.P., MS 1012/18).

⁹⁰ Mocher to Hobart, 19 Feb. 1793 (N.L.I., K.P., MS 1012/43).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² J. H. McEnery, *Fortress Ireland: the story of the Irish coastal forts and the River Shannon defence line* (Wicklow, 2006), ix.

⁹³ Mocher to Westmorland, 3 Mar. 1793 (N.L.I., K.P., MS 1012/53).

⁹⁴ McEnery, *Fortress Ireland*, p. 92.

⁹⁵ Oxley, ‘Living standards of Women’, p. 275.

that will be discussed in later chapters. These military-civilian interactions will be further investigated in the following case studies.

In late 1796 the threatened French invasion almost became a reality. British reaction to this near-miss may be seen in the memoranda written shortly afterwards in early 1797. Most of these were written by General Sir David Dundas, a noted army officer who was also quartermaster-general of the forces, outlining potential areas where a French force may land in Britain and Ireland, and what might be done to prevent this from happening.⁹⁶ The detailed reports indicate the seriousness with which Britain took the defence of Ireland in the aftermath of the Bantry Bay incident. The British response was to strengthen the Royal Navy, coastal defence and raise even more troops, further increasing the militarisation of Ireland.

British perceptions of the 1798 rebellion and the Act of Union

In 1797 the authorities increased their operations against subversive elements in Irish society. As Ireland still did not have a police force, the duty of enforcing law and order fell to the regulars, militia and fencibles, supported by the newly established yeomanry. This would have notable impacts on local economies, as detailed in a letter from an officer named Alexander Bisset to Pelham in July 1797, describing how local industry in the north was suffering as many Protestants were enlisting in the armed forces.⁹⁷ The following year, Rev. Isaac Asher requested that twenty-five regulars be sent to the area so that the Antrim yeomen who were weavers could ‘return to their looms’ and avoid contracting a ‘habit of idleness’ as soldiers.⁹⁸ This is an interesting indication of one of the effects of widespread militarisation in Ireland during the period; skilled craftsmen and workers were unable to work since their time was taken up by military life.

⁹⁶ ‘Defence of Great Britain and Ireland, 1796-1801’ (T.N.A., War Office Papers (W.O.), 30/64).

⁹⁷ Bisset to Pelham, 2 July 1797 (National Archives of Ireland, Dublin (N.A.I.), State of the Country Papers (S.O.C.), MS 1016/5).

⁹⁸ Asher to Castlereagh, July 1798 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1017/36).

Despite the great efforts made by the British and Irish governments to secure Ireland and keep the country stable, 1798 would mark the apex of a long process of disaffection, sectarian tensions and political agitation that had begun many years before. During March, almost all of the United Irishmen Leinster leadership was arrested, including the militarily experienced Lord Edward Fitzgerald, brother of the Duke of Leinster. This was a significant blow to the leadership and organisation of the United Irishmen. On 30 March martial law was declared in Ireland.⁹⁹ The Irish government took a very tough stance on the threat of rebellion and a policy of flogging, house-burning and torture was enacted across the country, in order to subdue the disaffected and root out the conspirators. Despite setbacks, open rebellion broke out throughout Ireland in May. After the first week of fighting, Kildare and Dublin were again secure in Crown hands. Most of the activity was in south-east Leinster and Wexford in particular where the rebels enjoyed some early successes but were eventually defeated when government reinforcements arrived in mid-June, culminating with the British victory at Vinegar Hill. The belated French landings, as previously discussed, were quickly defeated by British forces.

Irish troops, and in particular the militia and yeomanry, had dealt with most of the rebels, without need of English reinforcements.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, there had been a certain lack of support for the French in Mayo, where they initially landed. Dean Warburton wrote on 29 August to Viscount Castlereagh, the new Chief Secretary, informing him that the locals in Connaught had not been swayed by the French landings and that public opinion was now turning against them.¹⁰¹ This indicates that there was a serious disconnection between the rhetoric of the United Irishmen, who had hailed the French as the supposed liberators of the Irish people, and actual public opinion in Ireland.

⁹⁹ Pakenham, *The year of liberty*, p.69.

¹⁰⁰ Bartlett, 'Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion', p. 285.

¹⁰¹ Warburton to Castlereagh, 29 Aug. 1798 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1017/2).

CONCLUSIONS

The role of Ireland in the political policies and military strategies of France and Great Britain was complex and varied. Following the revolution, France became a symbol of liberty for Irish radicals who wished to replace monarchy with a form of democracy. The French republicans appeared willing to work with these radicals, at least to destabilise Britain. Initial interest was high, and is reflected in the large numbers of men and resources allocated to the Irish expedition in 1796; a considerable commitment that France was making to Ireland, at a time when it was beset on all fronts by numerous enemies. The portrayal of Ireland, by the invasion planners, as an oppressed nation in need of a liberator legitimised their military action and reinforced the powers of the newly established executive government, the French Directory.¹⁰²

However, analysis of the contemporary sources indicates that the lack of a dedicated plan in both 1796 and 1798 led to the failure of both invasion attempts. While the 1796 attempt involved a significant amount of troops, the reduction of the size of the force to a third of its original size in the 1798 attempt reflects the waning French enthusiasm for Irish affairs. A key conclusion of this assessment is that Ireland was not a significant priority in French military strategy, which is noteworthy in light of the substantial attention given to the Franco-Irish alliance in the literature. The Franco-Irish military tradition was not as strong as it had once been; Irish émigré troops had found service in the armies of the Catholic kingdoms of France and Spain but the French Revolution had severed those traditional ties; the transfer of the Irish military tradition, and its associated identity, from the French to the British service will be examined in more detail in the next chapter. This newer Franco-Irish military connection put France very firmly in the pragmatic role; the recently established Republic merely perceived Ireland as a strategic option in a wider war that was threatening its very survival.

¹⁰² Elliott, 'The role of Ireland in French war strategy', p. 203.

Conversely, based on correspondences between politicians and also the sheer amount of money spent on the Irish Establishment throughout the wars, it can be concluded that Ireland was not a colonial backwater, nor simply a recruiting ground for His Majesty's forces, but rather an important part of the British war effort and overall strategy. Ireland offered large amounts of manpower and supplies to Britain, but was also a potential weak point in British defences. The external threat of invasion prompted the strengthening of Irish defences; both in the form of new coastal forts and batteries and in the form of new amateur defence forces such as the militia, yeomanry and fencibles. These measures were very expensive for the Irish government. Prior to the Act of Union, the coastal defences of Ireland were the responsibility of the Irish administration and the Irish Board of Ordnance.¹⁰³ As will be seen in the case studies, the Irish Establishment was regularly required to man the forts and batteries along the coast. In the decade between the American War of Independence and the beginning of the French Revolutionary wars, the Irish coastal defences had become inadequate,¹⁰⁴ something which the Donegal Militia would experience when they were posted to Cork harbour. The Irish government simply did not have enough funds to improve these defences until after the Act of Union, when more funds from Britain became available.¹⁰⁵ Even so, very large amounts of money were required and the cost rose as the invasion threat returned during the Napoleonic wars; £34,005 was spent on the defences at Cork harbour alone by 1805, and a further £231,132 was approximately needed to finish the task.¹⁰⁶ This total of £265,137 comes to over nine million pounds in modern money.¹⁰⁷ Internal infrastructure was also improved in order to benefit the military. In 1798 Cornwallis used the Grand Canal to rapidly convey troops from Dublin to the French forces in

¹⁰³ McEnery, *Fortress Ireland*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹⁰⁷ National Archives currency converter (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency>) (27 Sept. 2013).

Connaught.¹⁰⁸ The Military Road in Wicklow, built by fencibles and militia, allowed great movement and access to the rebel strongholds in the Wicklow Mountains.¹⁰⁹

The internal threat of insurrection also had to be considered. The correspondence of British politicians in Westminster and Dublin Castle indicate that securing Ireland was of utmost importance to the British administration, and the authorities tried to maintain some level of social, political, military and economic stability. However, the events of 1798 undid many of their efforts. The British government and Irish executive believed that Irish affairs would be better run from Westminster than Dublin and pushed through the Act of Union, setting back the progress of Ireland for many years to come. After the Union Ireland was expected to contribute two seventeenths of the overall United Kingdom's expenditure for the next twenty years, reflecting how the wars had placed great demands on both Britain and Ireland.¹¹⁰

The return of the effective strength of the British army, as illustrated in Graph 1, indicates how the size of the Irish Establishment steadily increased for most of the wars, unaffected by the rising and dropping British garrison and overseas deployments. This indicates that the Irish Establishment was very important for British strategy and security; the Irish flank needed to be secure, especially as French invasion fears grew.

The 1798 Rebellion was caused by a culmination of factors, chiefly the rise of radical politics, growing discontent and the parallel militarisation of society. Yet it can be concluded that many Irish civilians wished to remain loyal citizens, as demonstrated by the success of the Dublin Castle intelligence network, the refusal of many Irish soldiers to join the rebels and French forces, and the ultimate failure of the 1798 rebellion. However, as already emphasised, the role of these Irish soldiers is largely overlooked in the existing literature, which focuses more on the rebels and their French allies. In the following

¹⁰⁸ McEnery, *Fortress Ireland*, p. 53.

¹⁰⁹ P. M. Kerrigan, *Castles and fortifications in Ireland: 1485-1945* (Cork, 1995), p. 180.

¹¹⁰ McEnery, *Fortress Ireland*, p. 57.

chapters, the experiences of these Irish soldiers will be studied in more detail, to reach a more comprehensive understanding of Irish participation in the British war effort, and to show how competing Irish identities faced a number of challenges. These challenges would have varying effects on the experiences of Irishmen in the British service, some would achieve notable success, whilst others experienced significant difficulties.

CHAPTER 2

IRISHMEN IN THE REGULAR BRITISH ARMY, 1690-1815

The outbreak of war in 1793 prompted the establishment of many new regiments in the British military that could be described as distinctly ‘Irish’, either serving within Ireland, such as the Irish militia, or overseas, such as the Catholic Irish Brigade. However, the tradition of Irishmen serving in the British military was not a new concept. Irishmen (Protestant and later Catholic) had served in the regular British army throughout the eighteenth century, in both specifically designated ‘Irish’ regiments, and in other regiments in the British army. As such, in order to understand the British army during the French Revolutionary wars, and the Irishmen who served in it, one must examine how the army developed over the course of the eighteenth century.

The aims of this chapter are to examine how Irish regiments were recruited and how they operated both before and after the Catholic Relief Act of 1793, to explore how the passing of the act influenced these existing regiments, and to investigate how Irish identity developed in the regular army over the eighteenth century. The experiences of both older and newer regiments that were raised after the British military was officially opened up to Irish Catholics will be explored. The chapter will also examine how Irish regiments in the regular army were recruited and operated during the French Revolutionary wars, to see if their Irish identity influenced their experiences. The experiences of Irishmen in the regular army during the Napoleonic wars will also be considered, as this was the most active period for the Irish regiments, and the British army in general. Findings will then be compared with the experience of other Irish formations discussed in this thesis.

IRISHMEN IN THE EARLY BRITISH ARMY

The modern British army had its origins in the aftermath of the War of the Three Kingdoms in the mid-seventeenth century, and entered a new phase under the command of William of Orange, following his victory at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. An independent army of Ireland was replaced by English, and later British, regiments garrisoned in barracks across the country.¹ A number of the regiments of William's army had been raised in Ireland, and would become the first of the 'Irish' regiments in the British army; these included the 4th Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, the 18th Royal Irish Regiment of Foot and the 27th Inniskilling Regiment of Foot.²

The British army was formally established in 1707, following the Act of Union between England and Scotland, and the subsequent merging of the English and Scottish armies.³ The army in Ireland, as with the rest of Britain, was to be exclusively Protestant; Catholics were deemed to be untrustworthy after their support of James II during the Williamite Wars. Catholics, whether Irish or English, were also distrusted because of their perceived allegiance to the Vatican, an international power outside the control of the British crown. This was reflected in the derogatory term 'Papist', one that conveys the mistrust in which Catholics were held in the early eighteenth century, and their suspected loyalties. As part of this mistrust, formalised in the penal laws, Irish Catholics were completely barred from enlistment in the British military or from bearing arms. As a result, many emigrated to the armies of Catholic Europe, most notably France and Spain, forming the Irish Brigades. However, the actual number of Irish 'Wild Geese' emigrants steadily declined as the

¹ John Childs, 'The Williamite War, 1689-1691' in Bartlett and Jeffery (eds), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1997), pp 188-210, at p. 210.

² Murphy, *The Irish Brigades*, pp 109-28.

³ Mallinson, *The making of the British army*, p. 72.

eighteenth century progressed, with the exception of the Catholic officers who still had the means to emigrate and find employment on the continent.⁴

Given the later dominance of Protestants in the armed forces, it is significant to note that in the early eighteenth century, Irish Protestants were also officially excluded from the ranks, as the British believed it was best to keep Irish Protestants in Ireland to watch over the Catholics, and they feared Irish Catholics might pretend to be Protestant in order to infiltrate the army.⁵ This indicates that the British authorities viewed Irish Catholics as potentially dangerous, and Irish Protestants as a means of containing their Catholic countrymen. However, it is likely that at times of need, a blind eye was turned to a recruit's religion.⁶ Furthermore, Irish Protestants were still permitted to enlist as officers, leading to a significant Irish element in the officer corps.

IRISHMEN IN THE BRITISH ARMY (1714-83)

The British army and Ireland in the eighteenth century

Following the Williamite Wars and the subsequent War of the Spanish Succession, which took place in the early years of the eighteenth century, the British army was reduced, from 70,000 men in 1709 to 26,000 by 1714.⁷ British foreign policy and military strategy focused on naval power to develop a trade empire, which resulted in reduction of the army.⁸ Over the course of the century, a series of events would increase Britain's need for Irishmen in the British army, and also help to assuage British suspicions of Irish Catholics, paving the way for further involvement of both Irish Protestants and Catholics in the British army.

⁴ For more on the Wild Geese tradition and the Irish Brigades, see Chapter 3.

⁵ Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: a history* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 170.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Mallinson, *The making of the British army*, p. 66.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

Domestic security remained a major issue during the eighteenth century, with an abortive Jacobite invasion attempt in 1708 followed by two major Jacobite uprisings taking place in Scotland in 1715 and 1745. The British authorities' continuing fear of Irish Catholic unrest is evidenced by the fact that, in 1715, precautionary measures were taken including the seizure of arms and horses from Catholics, requisitioning of stores of gunpowder and calling out the militia.⁹ In both cases the British redcoats defeated the Scottish rebels, and their French allies.¹⁰ While some Irish Catholics still supported the Jacobite cause, the majority did not rise in support of the Scottish rebels.¹¹ It may be argued that the most active Irish proponents of the Jacobite cause were already employed in the service of Louis XIV and the Stuarts, and those that remained in Ireland were less enthusiastic about a Jacobite uprising. Lack of access to arms would have also hampered Irish Catholic designs for an insurrection, and the heartland of Irish Jacobitism, Munster, had recently been devastated by a famine in 1741.¹² Irish regiments in the British army, including the 18th Royal Irish Regiment and the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons, actively took part in the suppression of the revolts and subsequent garrisoning of Scotland.¹³ Furthermore, in 1745, the restriction on recruiting Irish Protestants to the lower ranks was lifted, allowing Irish manpower to be utilised more fully.¹⁴ As such, these events could be viewed as an important turning point in the history of the Irish in the British service. As the Jacobite cause waned, it ceased to be a potential rallying-point for Irish Catholics, and these links were effectively severed in 1766 when the Vatican ended its recognition of the Jacobite claim to the British throne.¹⁵

Britain's growth of empire during this period also resulted in the gradual acceptance of Irish Protestant, and later Catholic contribution to the British armed forces, as the

⁹ S. J. Connolly, 'In defence of Protestant Ireland, 1660-1760' in Bartlett and Jeffery (eds), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1997), pp 231-46, at p. 239.

¹⁰ Mallinson, *The making of the British army*, pp 71-4, 96-7.

¹¹ Bartlett, *Ireland*, p. 169.

¹² Ó Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite cause*, p. 272

¹³ Murphy, *Irish Brigades*, p. 110, 121.

¹⁴ Bartlett, *Ireland*, p. 170.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 169.

demands of expansion and warfare necessitated relaxation of enlistment restrictions.¹⁶ The demand for more troops associated with the Seven Years War also necessitated a ‘blind eye’ being turned by recruiting officers to Catholic enlistment.¹⁷ Bartlett claims that this was more likely to happen when the regiment was destined for overseas service, rather than in the British Isles.¹⁸ If Catholic service was not visible to British, and Irish, Protestant civilians, it was less likely to cause concern. Sending Catholics overseas to be ‘out of sight and out of mind’ would occur again when the Franco-Irish Brigade was reconstituted in the British army later in the century.¹⁹

Influential members of the Ascendancy could raise an army regiment, as happened with Sir James Caldwell’s regiment of cavalry; Caldwell raised the regiment at his own expense, and it was then officially designated the 20th Light Dragoons.²⁰ It was likely that most, if not all, of these would have been Protestants. Many men from Protestant Ascendancy families served in the various wars of the eighteenth century, building a tradition of military service that will be seen in the follow chapters and case studies.

However, many Irish Catholics enlisted in Irish and British regiments, but without disclosing their religion.²¹ Sometimes Irish Catholics were even sent by colonels to Scotland to be recruited, in order to circumvent the ban on Irish recruits.²² Furthermore, while the main army remained officially off-limits to Irish Catholics, by 1760 Catholics were permitted to join the Royal Marines and the Royal Irish Artillery.²³ The East India Company, which owned its own private army that operated in cooperation with the regular British

¹⁶ Ibid, pp 169-70.

¹⁷ Alan J. Guy, ‘The Irish military establishment, 1660-1776’ in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1997), pp 211-30, at p. 219.

¹⁸ Bartlett, *Ireland*, pp 170-2.

¹⁹ See Ch. 3 for more details on the Wild Geese and Pitt’s Irish Brigade.

²⁰ Guy, ‘The Irish military establishment’, p. 220.

²¹ Karsten, ‘Irish soldiers in the British army’, p. 56, n. 20.

²² Thomas Bartlett, “‘A weapon of war yet untried’”: Irish Catholics and the armed forces of the Crown, 1760-1830’ in Fraser, T. G., Jeffery, Keith (eds), *Men, women and war : papers read before the XXth Irish Conference of Historians, University of Ulster, 6-8 June 1991* (Dublin, 1993), pp 66-85, at p.69.

²³ Bartlett, *Ireland*, p. 172.

army, also admitted Catholics.²⁴ These various avenues for Irish soldiers to enlist in the service of Great Britain demonstrate that the Irish contribution to the British military was not as restricted as it first seems.

The American War of Independence

The American War of Independence heralded significant changes not only for the British army at large, but also the role of Irishmen in the British military. The demands of an overseas war, combined with issues of domestic security, prompted a number of official, and unofficial, reforms for Irish Catholics. As the British army had been reduced following the end of the Seven Years War, a rapid recruitment drive was required. In early 1775, as war loomed, the lord lieutenant, Lord Harcourt, had been given permission by the secretary of state to recruit Irishmen for the regiments stationed in Ireland.²⁵ This was a measure to expedite the completion of understrength regiments before the outbreak of war in America. While not explicitly acknowledged, it was tacitly understood that some of these recruits would inevitably be Catholics.²⁶

The Irish upper classes generally supported the war and (unofficial) Catholic enlistment, Irish noblemen (including some Catholics like Lord Kenmare), offered additional bounties to men from their estates if they enlisted, or supplied beer and whiskey to recruitment parties.²⁷ Yet recruitment was slow and many of the Catholic lower classes were reluctant to enlist. Some even actively resisted the recruitment parties; for example, it was reported that the recruiting party organised by Lord Kenmare was attacked whilst attempting to recruit in Tralee, County Kerry, and their drums were broken.²⁸ Their lack of keenness may be attributed to the fact that they were the ones who would have had to serve in a foreign land. Opposition to the war in America may also have played a role. It is likely that

²⁴ Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army', pp 56-7, n. 20.

²⁵ Vincent Morley, *Irish opinion and the American Revolution, 1760-1783* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 137.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

the ambiguity of their position under the new unofficial recruiting policies exacerbated the issue, leading to unrest as later, ambiguity over whether the Irish Militia would be sent abroad or not in 1793 would contribute to a similar backlash.

In addition to manpower demands, the British government faced the problem of domestic security. When France joined with the rebel colonists, an invasion of Britain or Ireland became a distinct possibility. As described in the introduction, the Irish government was unwilling to finance a militia to complete the garrison, and the Irish Volunteers were privately formed to guard against invasion and assist the local magistrates.²⁹ This militarisation of Irish society would foreshadow the events of the 1790s, and the dangers of armed politics.

Catholic Relief during the American War of Independence

The ever increasing demand for manpower also prompted the British government to adopt a number of efforts to officially alleviate restrictions on Catholics, in particular after France entered the war against Britain. The British government was urged to carry through these reforms as a means to strengthen the army, as part of a wider pro-war stance that was being taken by many in parliament.³⁰ Some Catholic relief, it was hoped, would appease the clergy and Catholic nobility, who would both in turn encourage enlistment.³¹ Sir John Dalrymple, arguing for Catholic relief and recruitment, described Irish Catholics as ‘a weapon of war untried’, one that would give a major advantage to Britain in its war in America.³² The language here as well as the *quid pro quo* nature of Catholic relief suggests that Irish Catholics were a commodity to be utilised, rather than valued subjects.

²⁹ For more on the Volunteers, see Chapter 5.

³⁰ Robert Kent Donovan, ‘The military origins of the Roman Catholic relief programme of 1778’ in *Hist. Jn.*, xxviii, no. 1 (1985), pp 79-102, at p. 89.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 92.

³² *Ibid*, p. 93.

The Protestant Ascendancy was reluctant to relinquish any concessions to Catholics but the pressure of wider events ensured that the British government pushed ahead with the legislation.³³ In 1778 a Catholic Relief Act was passed that relaxed some of the penal laws.³⁴ The first draft had contained sweeping changes but the final and approved act was more truncated.³⁵ Catholics were still officially barred from bearing arms and enlisting in the military but other concessions were designed to foster goodwill in Catholics, and especially Irish Catholics, so that they would not rise up in support of their American cousins.³⁶

Yet opposition still remained amongst many Irish Protestants. For most of the century they had held the exclusive monopoly on military service; even when Irish Protestants were barred from the ranks of the regular army they had still held the right to bear arms, and serve in the local militia in times of need. Economic incentives helped alleviate some of this opposition; the officer corps remained exclusively Protestant, and unofficial Catholic recruitment to the ranks allowed some Protestant officers to quickly fill up their quotas required for promotion.³⁷ While Irish Protestants were opposed to Catholic Relief, their opposition did not take such an extreme path as that of some English Protestants; a wave of anti-Catholicism feelings that followed the Catholic Relief Act of 1778 triggered the infamous Gordon Riots of 1780, which devastated large parts of London and resulted in many civilian deaths.³⁸ Nevertheless, the precedent for concessions to Catholics in a time of national crisis, and their related military applications, had been set, and would emerge again as a central issue in the early 1790s.

³³ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 245.

³⁴ Donovan, 'The military origins of the Roman Catholic relief programme', pp 83-4.

³⁵ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 245.

³⁶ Cookson, *The British armed nation*, p. 154.

³⁷ Donovan, 'The military origins of the Roman Catholic relief programme', p. 92.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 79.

IRISHMEN IN THE BRITISH ARMY (1793-1815)

In the decade following the loss of the American colonies, the British army had been much reduced, and had become inefficient and undermanned.³⁹ British strategy had favoured the Royal Navy as the main form of both national defence, and defence of the overseas possessions. The army was stretched dangerously thin, guarding the British Isles and colonies, with little room for prolonged offensive campaigns. The outbreak of war in 1793 placed huge demands of manpower for the armed forces and over the next two decades Britain's armed forces grew rapidly; the army expanded from about 40,000 men in 1793 to about 250,000 men in 1813, while the navy reached a height of about 140,000 men during the Napoleonic wars.⁴⁰ These rapid expansions needed large amounts of new recruits, and Ireland would play a key part in this mass mobilisation of manpower.

Recruitment of Irishmen to the regular army

The Catholic Relief Act of 1793 permitted Irishmen to bear arms and serve in an official capacity in the defence of Ireland, and Britain. Military authorities were now able to recruit Irish Catholics in a much more efficient and expedient manner, with no need for subterfuge or legal uncertainty.

Regiments did not exclusively recruit from their assigned areas and despite intensive recruitment in Ireland, the Irish regiments themselves were not exclusively Irish. Regiments recruited from wherever they were stationed and this affected the national composition of each battalion or regiment. The 89th Regiment, later a battalion of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, began its recruitment in Ireland and finished it in Bristol.⁴¹ Its second battalion spent a number of years rotating around England and so had a large proportion of English recruits;

³⁹ Mallinson, *The making of the British army*, p. 132.

⁴⁰ David Gates, 'The transformation of the army, 1783-1815' in David Chandler and Ian Beckett (eds), *The Oxford history of the British army* (Oxford, 2003), pp 132-60, at p. 132.

⁴¹ D. A. Chart, 'The Irish levies during the Great French War', in *E.H.R.*, xxxii, no. 128 (Oct., 1917), pp 497-516, at p. 499.

out of 504 men, 374 were Irish, twenty-seven were Scottish, eight were ‘foreign’ and the remaining 95 were English.⁴² On the other hand, the 88th Connaught Rangers completed their numbers almost entirely from Connaught, and therefore would most likely have been predominantly Catholic.⁴³

As such, while some regiments were mostly populated with Irish Catholics, this was not by design. The recruitment strategy employed generally promoted diversity of national identity within the British military. A united British identity was regarded as a great advantage by some commanders; Sir John Moore believed the best regiments were one third English, one third Irish and one third Scottish.⁴⁴ Conversely, the Irish formations studied later in this thesis were highly unlikely to have English or Scottish recruits; the Irish Brigade was formed exclusively for Irish Catholics, and the fencibles, yeomanry and militia rotated around Ireland, and so only recruited within Ireland. The challenges that these formations faced due to their distinctly Irish identities will be explored in later chapters.

The large resource of manpower that Ireland offered meant that many English and Scottish regiments were also recruiting in Ireland. Seven British regiments that arrived in Ireland in late 1793 were ordered to raise 200 recruits each.⁴⁵ English regiments had to be reminded twice in 1807 that they needed written permission to recruit in Ireland, indicating the over-eagerness of the regiments to utilise Irish manpower.⁴⁶ English regiments also recruited Irishmen who were resident in Britain; the 57th (West Middlesex) Regiment included about 34% Irish in 1809, recruited from the London area.⁴⁷ Again, these regiments possessed a diversity of national identity that was unlike the Irish formations examined later in the thesis.

⁴² Harris, *The Royal Irish Fusiliers*, p.43.

⁴³ G. A. Hayes-McCoy, ‘The raising of the Connaught Rangers, 1793’ in *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, xxi, no. 3/4 (1945), pp 133-139, at p. 135.

⁴⁴ Denman, ‘*Hibernia officina militum*’, p. 166.

⁴⁵ Bartlett, ‘Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion’, p. 257.

⁴⁶ Denman, ‘*Hibernia officina militum*’, p. 165.

⁴⁷ Dunne-Lynch, ‘Humour and defiance’, p. 63.

Recruitment to the army was highest in the southwest and the interior of Ireland, and lower in Ulster, where many Irishmen remained to continue their work in the linen industry.⁴⁸ The regiments often recruited on a regional basis; for example the 83rd from the Dublin area, the 88th from the west of Ireland, the 89th from the south and the 18th and 27th from the north.⁴⁹

In addition to the various regiments, both Irish and British, which recruited in Ireland, independent companies were also raised; forty-four were raised in Ireland by May 1793. These companies were not attached to a particular regiment and could be added to whatever regiment needed them.⁵⁰ However, their unattached nature encouraged the practice of bounty jumping; a soldier might enlist in one unit and take the enlistment bounty, before deserting and repeating the trick with another unit in a different location.⁵¹ Desertion rates were high in the regulars, as well as in the militia.⁵² One way to counter deserters and bounty jumpers was the offer of rewards for their apprehension; five guineas were offered for anyone who brought in deserters from the Connaught Rangers in November 1793.⁵³ Another way in which desertion was countered was the decision to send regiments out of Ireland as soon as they were completed.⁵⁴ This lessened the chances for the men to desert whilst also making use of them as soon as possible.

While enlisting was usually a voluntary decision, some recruits were forced to do so. After 1798, many captured rebels were given the option of either standing trial or enlisting in a regiment that was destined for a tropical garrison.⁵⁵ This indicates the confidence the army had in its ability to incorporate disaffected men, whether they were Irish rebels or common criminals from throughout the British Isles. Many of the men who enlisted in the 88th

⁴⁸ Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army', p. 38.

⁴⁹ Cookson, *The British armed nation*, p. 171.

⁵⁰ Chart, 'The Irish levies during the Great French War', p. 498.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Denman, '*Hibernia officina militum*', p. 163.

⁵³ Hayes-McCoy, 'The raising of the Connaught Rangers', pp 138.

⁵⁴ Cookson, *The British armed nation*, p. 155.

⁵⁵ Chart, 'The Irish levies during the Great French War', p. 509.

Connaught Rangers in 1800, prior to its departure to India, were former rebels, as were recruits to the 89th.⁵⁶ English regiments such as the 30th also took in pardoned rebels.⁵⁷ Indeed, one officer claimed that his best men were six Irishmen who had been captured at Vinegar Hill in 1798.⁵⁸ The actual evidence for significant numbers of former rebels remains unclear however.

Despite the alleged large numbers of former rebels, as well as former militiamen who had volunteered for the line, the Irish contribution to the regular army was generally seen as positive, with no examples of major disaffection, but rather the usual indiscipline that any army at that time would have experienced. The one exception was the 5th Irish Light Dragoons. Established in 1689, and possessing battle honours including Blenheim and Ramillies, the regiment was accused of being disaffected during the 1798 rebellion, where it had performed poorly.⁵⁹ Morale was low and while only a few men were found to be United Irishmen, the regiment was still disbanded for sixty years.⁶⁰ Overall, the Irish in the regular army remained loyal throughout 1798. About sixty Irishmen were court-martialled for treasonable conduct, but when compared with the thousands serving on the Establishment, and in the rest of the Army, this remains a very small proportion.⁶¹

The Irish soldier

Like the rest of the British army, the lower classes of society filled the lower ranks of the army. Like the majority of Irishmen at the time, Irish recruits were typically lower class Catholic farm labourers.⁶² Army pay was not particularly good; in a week a soldier earned only about a quarter of what a labourer employed in the Royal Navy's dockyards would

⁵⁶ Hayes-McCoy, 'The raising of the Connaught Rangers, 1793', p. 138; John Fortescue, *History of the British army* (13 vols, London, 1915), iv, part two, 622.

⁵⁷ Fortescue, *History of the British army*, iv, part two, 622.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 701-2.

⁵⁹ Fortescue, *History of the British army*, iv, part one, 596.

⁶⁰ Murphy, *Irish Brigades*, p. 140.

⁶¹ Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army', p. 42.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 37.

earn.⁶³ Low pay, along with the hazards of service, meant that incentives had to be offered in order to induce Irishmen to enlist; every recruit was entitled to a bounty, a cash payment of about fifteen pounds, upon enlistment. The potential for long sea voyages and tropical disease associated with enlisting in the regular army meant that regular regiments also needed to offer advantages over domestic service in the militia and yeomanry. Recruitment posters, some even in Irish, advertised higher pay and attractive conditions of service for the regular army.⁶⁴ Other posters advertised the exciting opportunity for added wealth in the form of plunder, or as one poster in County Clare for service in the West Indies put it, ‘Spanish gold and dollars.’⁶⁵

Economic necessity was not the only factor influencing enlistment, as young men, whether Irish, English or Scottish, displayed a desire for adventure and freedom as soldiers in King George’s army.⁶⁶ Later nineteenth-century folk songs such as the ‘Kerry Recruit’ or the ‘Rocks of Bawn’ described the excitement and adventure of being an Irish soldier in the British army.⁶⁷ Adverts were also placed in the local press; in October 1793 the *Connaught Journal* announced the raising of the 88th Regiment, and that ‘great encouragement’ would be given to ‘young men of good character, who wish to serve our beloved monarch.’⁶⁸ This appeal to a sense of patriotism encouraged men in Britain and Ireland alike to join up, and defend their homelands against the perceived tyranny of republicanism. Similar sentiments were expressed by commanders and politicians when addressing the home-defence formations such as the militia and yeomanry.

Incentives were not just applied to the rank-and-file. The officers of the 88th Connaught Rangers were awarded their commissions based on how many recruits they

⁶³ Gates, ‘The transformation of the army’, p. 137.

⁶⁴ Denman, ‘*Hibernia officina militum*’, p. 165.

⁶⁵ Karsten, ‘Irish soldiers in the British army’, p. 38.

⁶⁶ Linch, ‘The recruitment of the British army 1807-1815’, p. 208.

⁶⁷ Karsten, ‘Irish soldiers in the British army’, p. 38.

⁶⁸ Hayes-McCoy, ‘The raising of the Connaught Rangers’, p. 135

brought in.⁶⁹ A circular to infantry colonels in 1793 informed them that officers were encouraged to recruit ‘to extraordinary exertions by a speedy prospect of preferment.’⁷⁰ Family connections also facilitated the appointment of officers; in the case of the 88th, all of the officers, apart from two, were from County Galway, and many were related to the colonel, John Thomas de Burgh.⁷¹ Former Volunteers were also encouraged to join up, as the colonel’s brother, the 12th earl of Clanrickard, had been an enthusiastic Volunteer commander in the 1780s.⁷² Like the recruits, the gentlemen would have also recognised the social prestige of a smart uniform, and military service as an officer offered an avenue to display one’s loyalty and ability, whilst also enjoying the trappings of military life.

The use of Irish troops in the regular army

New Irish regiments were usually quickly trained and then sent for garrison duty, allowing experienced regiments to undertake offensive operations.⁷³ It does not appear that their Irish identity influenced this, but rather their newness. This rush to send regiments abroad would have a negative effect on their ability to train; under ideal circumstances regular regiments in the British army needed two to three years to perfect their drill.⁷⁴

Some of the more senior regiments were still assigned garrison duties as well as active campaigning. The 18th Royal Irish Regiment took part in the Toulon and Egyptian expeditions, but spent the rest of the Revolutionary, and all of the subsequent Napoleonic wars, on garrison duties on the Channel Islands and in the West Indies.⁷⁵ The 8th Royal Irish Light Dragoons took part in Flanders campaign, and later garrison duty in South Africa.⁷⁶ Garrison duty did not mean inactivity however; the 1st battalion of the 83rd (County of

⁶⁹ Murphy, *Irish Brigades*, p. 185.

⁷⁰ Circular from War Office to infantry colonels, 1 Nov 1793 (N.L.I., K.P. MS 1002/130).

⁷¹ Hayes-McCoy, ‘The raising of the Connaught Rangers’, p. 135.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 136.

⁷³ Chart, ‘The Irish levies during the Great French War’, p. 503.

⁷⁴ Nelson, *Irish militia*, p. 77.

⁷⁵ Murphy, *Irish Brigades*, pp 110-1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 147.

Dublin) Regiment was stationed in the West Indies and took part in suppression of the 'Maroon Rebellion' of former slaves in Jamaica.⁷⁷

During the French Revolutionary wars, the regular army remained a small part of the Irish Establishment, with the militia and yeomanry making up the majority of the garrison. Nine regiments of regular foot had headquarters in Ireland in 1798, but four of these had less than 100 men each.⁷⁸ Ireland itself became an important *dépôt* for the regular army in the early nineteenth century; a training camp was set up for light infantry in the Phoenix Park, Dublin, while most of the supplies sent to Wellington in the Peninsula came from Cork.

Fourteen Irish regiments were sent to the Peninsula, to serve under Wellington, who reckoned that his overall army was about a third Irish.⁷⁹ These Irish soldiers achieved a reputation for ability, if not necessarily high levels of discipline.⁸⁰ Whilst major breaches of discipline received the usual harsh army punishment, it seems that British officers were often bemused by the humorous defiance of Irish soldiers.⁸¹ The Irish regiments also performed well in the field; the 88th Connaught Rangers were noted for their courage and tenacity, especially on the charge, and often used for the difficult tasks of storming defences, while the 87th Prince of Wales's Own Irish was the first British regiment to capture a French regimental eagle standard.⁸²

While the Irish regiments initially consisted of only one battalion, the increasing demand for more troops, and influxes from the militia after 1800, allowed most regiments to raise a second or even third battalion. For example, the 1st battalion of the 27th Inniskilling Regiment took part in the Flanders campaign in the early 1790s, followed by garrison duties in the West Indies, and the Egyptian and Waterloo campaigns, while the 2nd and 3rd

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 166.

⁷⁸ Chart, 'The Irish levies during the Great French War', p. 507.

⁷⁹ Bartlett, 'Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion', p. 257.

⁸⁰ Fortescue, *History of the British army*, vii, 192-3.

⁸¹ Dunne-Lynch, 'Humour and defiance', p. 76.

⁸² Holmes, *Redcoat*, p. 59; Chappell, *Wellington's Peninsula regiments*, p. 33.

battalions took part in the Peninsular campaign and the 1812 war in North America.⁸³ The 1st battalion of the 87th (Prince of Wales's Own Irish) Regiment took part in the expedition to the Low Countries and then garrison duties in the West Indies, while the 2nd battalion saw garrison duty in Ireland and the Channel Islands, before it was sent to the Peninsula.⁸⁴ In these ways, the Irish regiments, and their battalions, were used like any other English or Scottish regiment or battalion; they were sent wherever they were needed, and their national identity does not appear to have affected how, and where they were deployed.

The contribution of the Ascendancy to the regular army was also significant. The sons of Ascendancy families often felt that the military was one of the careers that allowed them to express their loyalty and ability.⁸⁵ Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, was the most famous of the Anglo-Irish officers that served during the French Revolutionary wars, but many of his most notable subordinates were also Irish, including William Carr Beresford, 1st Viscount Beresford and general in both the British and Portuguese armies, Galbraith Lowry Cole, colonel of the 27th Inniskilling Regiment and commander of the 4th division, and Robert William 'Light Bob' O'Callaghan, commander of the 39th regiment.⁸⁶

The Irish regiments did not have a monopoly on fame and reputation; many English and Scottish regiments gained, or built upon, reputations in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. While Henry Dundas believed the Scottish Highlands were an excellent recruiting ground, Scotland actually contributed less than what he believed, about 15.7% of the recruits and 25% of the officers.⁸⁷ Yet the Highland regiments emerged as an iconic element of the British army in the nineteenth century. Ireland had not experienced clearances like in the Highlands, and still retained a large rural labouring population to utilise. There were many examples of how Irish troops were regularly recognised for their bravery and

⁸³ Murphy, *Irish Brigades*, pp 130-1.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, pp 176-7.

⁸⁵ Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army', p. 35.

⁸⁶ Atkinson, 'Irish regiments of the line in the British army', pp.20-3.

⁸⁷ Charles Esdaile, 'The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793-1815' in Spiers, Crang and Strickland (eds), *A military history of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2012), pp 407-35, at pp 409-10, 412-3.

tenacity; possibly the most famous example of this was the 27th Inniskilling enduring, without movement, a murderous cannon bombardment at Waterloo; Lieutenant John Kincaid of the 95th Rifles described how, ‘the 27th regiment were lying literally dead, in square, a few yards behind us.’⁸⁸

Irish identity in the regular army

Irish regiments appear to have acquired a reputation for being somewhat more ill-disciplined than the other regiments of the army, with a high number of courts martial.⁸⁹ The 18th Irish Hussars had noted discipline problems relating to drinking and stealing whilst on campaign; Wellington threatened to dismount them and send them home after they looted Joseph Bonaparte’s royal baggage train in Spain.⁹⁰

However, this indiscipline was countered by a reputation for their humour and hardiness, contradicting the perceived unreliability that had been taken for granted by British commanders in the earlier eighteenth century.⁹¹ The Irish were seen as good soldiers due to their tough peasant upbringing.⁹² Humour as a means of enduring hardship whilst on campaign is a common theme for many armies, and not restricted to Irish troops.⁹³ Dunne-Lynch describes this as a ‘positive stereotype’ for Irish soldiers, one that Irish soldiers were happy to accept.⁹⁴ This is a reasonable opinion, considering the vilification of Catholics soldiers, and Catholics in general, that had been commonplace in Britain and Ireland during the early eighteenth century.

Visual manifestations of Irish identity included regimental colours and badges; older regiments bore numerous battle honours and newer regiments quickly gained honours of

⁸⁸ John Kincaid, *Adventures with the Rifle Brigade: in the Peninsula, France and the Netherlands from 1809 to 1815* (London, 1830), p. 342.

⁸⁹ Charles Oman, *A history of the Peninsular War* (7 vols, Oxford, 1930), vii, 149.

⁹⁰ Murphy, *Irish Brigades*, pp 164-5.

⁹¹ Dunne-Lynch, ‘Humour and defiance’, p. 62.

⁹² Denman, ‘*Hibernia officina militum*’, p. 166.

⁹³ Dunne-Lynch, ‘Humour and defiance’, pp 64-5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 66.

their own. Popular regimental songs like ‘Garryowen’ and ‘St. Patrick’s Day’, and the wearing of shamrock on 17 March, also helped foster a sense of Irish identity within the British military, and especially within the Irish regiments.⁹⁵ While there were many Protestants serving in the ranks, and the officer corps was in fact mostly Protestant, Irish identity in the British army was strongly associated with Catholicism. The majority of the rank-and-file were Catholic, although Wellington observed that any overt display of piety by Irish soldiers were usually reserved for eliciting wine from the Spanish and Portuguese civilians, as fellow Catholics.⁹⁶ Mass-going was not necessarily a common practice back in Ireland, and for many Irishmen, regular attendance may only have begun when they enlisted.⁹⁷

When anti-Catholic feelings did occur, they appear to have been restricted to certain Irish Protestant officers.⁹⁸ This is unsurprising, given that the inferiority of Catholics had been formalised in the penal laws for almost a century, and furthermore, Irish Protestants had been charged by Britain with guarding against the perceived menace of Catholic Ireland. Such views were now being countered by the growth in support for Catholic relief. The British army also actively sought to avoid sectarian problems (e.g. by attempting to halt the spread of Orange Order lodges in the regiments), perhaps recognising the threat that this would have for both regimental and army-wide cohesion.⁹⁹

Despite these moves towards Catholic Relief, the officer corps remained almost exclusively Protestant. Even after the Union, Catholic officers could only hold their commissions in the regular army within Ireland, and had to give them up if they left the country. As a result many did not disclose their religion; some were punished for this but

⁹⁵ Cookson, *The British armed nation*, p. 178.

⁹⁶ Holmes, *Redcoat*, p. 355.

⁹⁷ Kennedy, ‘True Brittons and Real Irish’, pp 47-8.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 48.

⁹⁹ Linch, ‘The recruitment of the British army 1807-1815’, pp 243-4.

most were left untroubled.¹⁰⁰ This opposition would continue for a number of years, until Catholic Emancipation was finally passed in 1829, but overall the British military was willing to place practicality over prejudice, utilising the Catholics of Ireland in the great struggle against France.

CONCLUSIONS

As this chapter has demonstrated, Ireland represented an important contribution to the British army during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. The Army List of 1796 recorded sixty-four new regiments, of which thirty were of Irish origin.¹⁰¹ From 1793 to 1815, some 150,000 Irishmen served in the British military; Ireland contributed about one third of the military manpower of the army, yet only represented about 28% of the population of the United Kingdom.¹⁰² The largely rural, labouring population made for a readily available manpower resource. Labourers represented the largest proportion of the British army overall, regardless of nationality; Coss's statistical sampling of a number of British regiments during the Peninsular War illustrates that about 40% of all recruits were labourers.¹⁰³

The army was also an important place for Ascendancy to demonstrate their loyalty and ability. The sight of smartly-dressed recruiting parties marching around Ireland, and the offer of a military pension, induced many Irishmen of both the upper and lower classes to enlist.¹⁰⁴ While the regimental structure of the British army allowed distinct national and sub-national groups to display the symbols of their identity,¹⁰⁵ such as the kilted highlanders or the crowned harp of the Irish regiments, the reality of the army's recruitment strategy

¹⁰⁰ Bartlett, "A weapon of war untried", pp 76-7.

¹⁰¹ Chart, 'The Irish levies during the Great French War', p. 503.

¹⁰² Dunne-Lynch, 'Humour and defiance', p. 64.

¹⁰³ Coss, 'All for the King's shilling', p. 108.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 114.

¹⁰⁵ Kennedy, "True Brittons and Real Irish", p. 46.

meant that regiments were not exclusive to their parent region, and could in fact be quite diverse in national identities yet united in the common goal of defending the British Isles. Once enlisted, Irishmen were not heavily politicised, and apparently displayed more loyalty to their regiment, and their comrades, than to any radical political movement. This was a key factor in the development of an Irish identity within the wider British military identity.

The external pressure of a global war had a direct effect of pushing forward the Catholic Question; Pitt and Dundas argued the necessity of Catholic relief given the ‘present state of the world’.¹⁰⁶ However, the British and Irish governments still encountered difficulties, especially whenever George III felt that Catholics were being granted too many concessions; Grenville’s Ministry of Talents fell in 1807 over the question of Catholic Emancipation, including the question of awarding Catholics commissions in the regular army.¹⁰⁷ As the following chapters will demonstrate, the Catholic Question was one that had numerous effects on Irishmen serving the military, be it army, militia, yeomanry, or even unique units such as Pitt’s Irish Brigade.

Over the course of the century, Irish soldiers had gone from being officially excluded to becoming an integral part of the British military. The army was willing if not eager, as evidenced by the zeal with which British regiments recruited, to have Irishmen in their ranks, even proven rebels. Indeed, diversity of national identities, including Irish, was considered by some to be preferable in a regiment. Once enlisted, an Irishman quickly found himself sent overseas and put to use, as part of a larger military force that was increasing constantly, as the scale of warfare in Europe and beyond rose to unforeseen heights.

As the nineteenth century progressed Ireland continued to supply more and more men to the British armed forces. Irish soldiers and Irish regiments took part in all of the major campaigns during the Victorian period, building upon an already impressive

¹⁰⁶ Bartlett, “‘A weapon of war untried’”, p. 73.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, pp 77-8.

reputation earned in the Napoleonic Wars. A number of Irish regiments were part of the British force sent to the Crimea in the 1850s, where the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons distinguished themselves with their participation in the Charge of the Heavy Brigade at Balaclava in October 1854.¹⁰⁸ The 18th Royal Irish Regiment was present at the capture of Sevastopol in 1855 and later participated in the British counter-attacks during the Indian Rebellion of 1857.¹⁰⁹ Its first battalion subsequently took part in the Second Afghan War while the regiment's second battalion fought in the Second Maori War in New Zealand.¹¹⁰ The Connaught Rangers fought in South Africa during the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879.¹¹¹ Many of the Irish regiments, including the 8th Hussars, the 2nd Royal Irish Rifles and Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, also took part in the campaigns in South Africa, during in the Second Boer War of 1899-1902.¹¹² Irish regiments, and Irishmen, had become fully integrated into the British military, fighting alongside English, Scottish and Welsh in the many battles and campaigns that took place across the British Empire.

Despite the rapid rise in numbers of Irishmen in the British army in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the historiography of the Irish military tradition has tended to focus on the Wild Geese tradition, and the Irish who fought for the armies of Europe. This focus ignores the fact that the Wild Geese tradition had waned considerably by the latter half of the eighteenth century, and many more Irishmen were enlisting in the British army than emigrating to France or Spain. While Irish Catholic gentry still had the means to make this journey, many ordinary Irish Catholics found the British army a suitable employer.

Later nineteenth century Irish historiography was heavily influenced by a nationalist, and Fenian, interest in the Irish military history tradition, despite the fact that Ireland

¹⁰⁸ Murphy, *Irish Brigades*, p. 123.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, pp 111-2.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 112.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 187.

¹¹² E. M. Spiers, 'Army organisation and society in the nineteenth century' in Bartlett and Jeffery (eds), *A military history of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1997), pp 335-57, at p. 349.

consistently provided more and more men to the British army throughout the century. Almost a century of loyal service in the British armed forces did not fit with the nationalist image of the Irish soldier, and therefore the Wild Geese and the United Irishmen came to dominate the historiography.¹¹³ This focus influenced the historiography in the following century, and used as a part of the wider nationalist narrative. The lack of interest in the Irish presence in the British military continued after independence, as Irish military historiography continued to be heavily influenced by a nationalist agenda designed to strengthen Irish society in its formative years of independence.¹¹⁴ Historians such as Hayes-McCoy wrote extensively on Irish military history, but somewhat overlooked the Irish in the British army; his *Irish battles, a military history of Ireland* focused solely on battles on Irish soil, rather than the many more in which Irishmen took part in, as part of the British army.¹¹⁵ While the study of the Irish in the British army was not completely ignored, and individual regiments or officers did receive some scholarly attention, the focus in the historiography on the romantic tradition of the Wild Geese, as well as Wolfe Tone, the United Irishmen and Robert Emmet, contrasts sharply with the relatively unexplored story of the many Irishmen who enlisted in the British army.¹¹⁶

In more recent years, there has been a growth in interest in the wider Irish military tradition, one that goes beyond the nationalist narrative that had been popular in the twentieth century. Despite the long history of Irishmen in the British service, it was not until 2006 that the ‘Soldiers and Chiefs’ exhibit at the National Museum of Ireland in Collins Barracks, Dublin, was opened.¹¹⁷ The exhibit charts the history of Irish soldiers, at home and abroad, and the Irish contribution to the British military features prominently, reflecting the significant number of Irish who enlisted throughout the centuries. The early years of the

¹¹³ Elliott, *Partners in revolution*, pp 369-71.

¹¹⁴ Mary Coffey, ‘The teaching of Irish history in the 1920s’, p. 118.

¹¹⁵ G. A. Hayes-McCoy, *Irish battles, a military history of Ireland* (London, 1969).

¹¹⁶ Ó Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite cause*; Morrissey, ‘A lost heritage’, p. 71.

¹¹⁷ *Irish Times*, 7 Oct. 2006.

twenty-first century have also witnessed a surge in interest in Ireland's role in the First World War, adding to the already voluminous scholarship dedicated to the revolutionaries of 1913-22, and a greater awareness of the many Irishmen who enlisted in the British army during the war.¹¹⁸ This was reflected in the visit of Queen Elisabeth II to the Irish National War Memorial Gardens in Dublin during her state visit to Ireland in 2011, commemorating the Irishmen who died during the war, and the subsequent state visit of Irish President Michael D. Higgins to the United Kingdom, during which he viewed the standards of the disbanded Irish regiments, which are held in Windsor Castle.¹¹⁹ This greater understanding of the shared military heritage of Britain and Ireland has been a significant step forwards not only in academic terms, but also in the general public's perceptions of relations between Britain and Ireland.

While there is now a greater awareness of the Irish in the British army during the First World War, this tradition stretches back much further. As this chapter has demonstrated, the Irish contribution to the British army had begun before the French Revolutionary wars, but it was during the 1790s that Irishmen, both Protestant and Catholic, began to make a serious and considerable contribution, one that would eventually account for one third of British military manpower. Irishmen, regardless of their religion, could now openly serve and demonstrate their loyalty and ability. While it is important to acknowledge the role of the Wild Geese, Wolfe Tone, the United Irishmen and others in Irish history, the imbalance in terms of the Irish military historiography needs to be corrected.

Whilst many Irishmen found fame and fortune, or even disease and death, in the regular army, many also chose to enlist in the home defence regiments, or even the reformed Catholic Irish Brigade. The following case studies will examine how their experiences differed from those in the regular army. These regiments were less diverse in identity,

¹¹⁸ See Introduction for more on the historiography of Ireland and the First World War.

¹¹⁹ *Irish Independent*, 17 May 2011; *Irish Times*, 9 April 2014.

recruiting exclusively within Ireland. They were also closer, both literally and figuratively, to the socio-political issues within Ireland at this time. The following chapters will explore how these regiments were affected by both international and domestic events in different ways, and explore how Irish identity developed in each formation.

CHAPTER 3

‘A FAIR CHANCE’? THE IRISH BRIGADE IN THE BRITISH SERVICE, 1794-98

This chapter, and the others that follow, examine four case study Irish units that were raised during the French Revolutionary wars. As stated in Table 1. of the introduction, they consist of the Catholic Irish Brigade, the Donegal Regiment of Militia, the Doneraile Yeomanry and the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry. Each regiment or unit represents a different aspect of Irish identity and Irish contribution to the British military during the wars, and examines their experiences as they were raised, trained, deployed and disbanded. The varied reasons for their establishment, how they were deployed and their experiences of the wars are explored in this, and following, chapters.

The first case study unit, the Catholic Irish Brigade, was directly affected by Anglo-Irish political manoeuvring during the wars. Following the French Revolution and the disbandment of the Irish Brigade in the French service, a number of émigré Franco-Irish officers offered their services to Prime Minister William Pitt and the British government and an exclusively Catholic brigade, also known as Pitt’s Irish Brigade, was formed from these officers and newly recruited Irishmen. In the Irish Brigade the well-established Franco-Irish ‘Wild Geese’ military tradition combined with the needs of the British military and the move towards social reform. The formation of the Irish Brigade was an important step towards the creation of an Irish military tradition within the British service; yet in spite of its political and military significance, scholarship on this unit is particularly scarce.¹

¹ Martinez, ‘Semper et Ubique Fidelis’, pp. 141-4; Stephen McGarry, *Irish Brigades abroad: from the Wild Geese to the Napoleonic wars* (Dublin: The History Press, 2013), pp. 170-1

This chapter will not only document the unit's service history, but also the political significance of the unit in the broader context of Catholic reform, along with the negative effects this had on the soldiers. The negative experiences of the Irish Brigade can be viewed as stemming from a clash of identity between the Protestant Ascendancy, who were deeply concerned about the implications of arming the Catholics of Ireland, and the Catholic Franco-Irish, who wished to prove their loyalty to Britain. Yet, initial opposition from Irish Protestants was countered by support from British politicians, illustrating the changing attitudes towards Catholics in the British military, as well as the importance of Ireland in British politics and strategy.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE BRIGADE, 1689-1792

The Irish Brigade in the service of Britain owed its origins to the Irish Brigade that had served the French kings during the late seventeenth century and most of the eighteenth century. In the late 1680s Louis XIV of France supported his cousin James II of England in James' failed attempt to regain the English crown, supplying James with a new army that was used to invade Ireland. In return, James sent a number of Irish regiments to France in 1689 under Lord Mountcashel, to serve with the French army. These Jacobite regiments were joined in the early 1690s by displaced Irish soldiers from James' defeated army, and formed what became known as the Irish Brigade.²

The penal laws meant that throughout the eighteenth-century many Irish Catholics sought employment in the Catholic armies of Europe, principally those of France and Spain. These Catholic soldiers formed the 'Wild Geese' regiments of James' army in exile, and as the Jacobite cause waned, they were gradually incorporated into the main French royal

² Murphy, *The Irish Brigades*, pp 10-30.

army.³ The Irish Brigade soon came to prominence among foreign formations serving in the French Bourbon army. The regiments bore the names of their colonels and participated in numerous campaigns, including their famous charge at the battle of Fontenoy in 1745. The officers of the brigade were Franco-Irish noblemen, many of whom had been either born or raised in France. Their fathers and grandfathers had also served in the brigade, illustrating the strong Irish Catholic military and familial tradition that now existed in the French army, a tradition that had been suppressed in Ireland itself. Others emigrated to enlist in the Spanish army, forming the Irish Brigade in the Spanish service. The three Irish regiments were named Irlanda, Hibernia and Ultonia.⁴

While the highest numbers of recruits to the Irish Brigades in Europe arrived in the early part of the eighteenth century, and there was a steady decline in the number of native Irishmen in the ranks as the century progressed, this still represented a significant contribution by Irish Catholics to the armies of continental Europe, rather than to the British army. There was less of a drop in the officer corps, as displaced Catholic gentlemen still had the means to more easily emigrate and move around Europe. The increasing demands of global warfare in the later eighteenth century would prompt the British authorities to reconsider this situation, and to harness Catholic manpower rather than divert it to their Bourbon enemies. Like the Irish Brigade in the French service, the numbers of native-Irishmen also dropped steadily in the Spanish Irish Brigade as the eighteenth-century progressed. As the preceding chapter demonstrated, Catholic recruitment to the British regular army had been rising steadily, if covertly, over the course of the eighteenth century.

Following the French Revolution in 1789, reforms of the French army meant that the regiments of the Irish Brigade were reorganised and renumbered as regular French line regiments. The Republican government's attempts to lessen the Franco-Irish identity of the

³ Genet-Rouffiac, 'The Wild Geese in France', pp 32-7; J. C. O'Callaghan, *History of the Irish brigades in the service of France* (Glasgow, 1870).

⁴ Murphy, *The Irish Brigades*, pp 41-51.

brigade prompted a significant migration of both officers and rank and file.⁵ A significant number of the brigade remained loyal to the Royalist cause and joined the ill-fated Army of the Princes, the pro-Royalist army which rallied around the exiled Bourbon princes that had escaped from France, Louis XVI's cousin, the Prince de Condé and the king's nephew, the Comte d'Artois. They fought alongside the armies of Austria and Prussian until the Royalist defeat at Valmy in 1792, which resulted in the establishment of the French Republic. Following Valmy, the Allies retreated and support for the Army of the Princes waned. The Irish Brigade was soon disbanded and its men sought employment elsewhere.⁶

ORIGINS OF PITT'S IRISH BRIGADE, 1793-95

An offer to Britain

In 1793 the British government received the first of two separate offers from Franco-Irish officers to recreate the Irish Brigade. This first offer came from Charles Edward, Vicomte Walsh de Serrant, a Franco-Irish nobleman and colonel of the former Walsh Regiment of the Royal French Army.⁷ Charles' brother, Antoine Philippe, Comte de Walsh de Serrant, had also served as colonel of the regiment.⁸ Interestingly, this initial offer is not documented in accounts mentioning the origins of the Irish Brigade, such as Mary O'Connell's *The last colonel of the Irish Brigade*.⁹

⁵ Martinez, 'Semper et ubique fidelis', pp 141-4.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Revue, infanterie irlandaise, 92e régiment, 17 Aug. 1791 (Service Historique de la Défense, Paris (S.H.D.), Records of the 92nd (Walsh's) Regiment, Xb 194).

⁸ Revue, infanterie irlandaise, 92e régiment, Aug.-Sept. 1791 (S.H.D., Records of the 92nd (Walsh's) Regiment, Xb 194).

⁹ Mrs M. J. O'Connell, *The last colonel of the Irish Brigade, Count O'Connell* (2 vols, London, 1892), ii, 113.

In March 1793 the Vicomte wrote from his residence in London to Pitt, offering to recreate the three regiments of the Irish Brigade.¹⁰ He proposed that the regiments be employed in either in the service of Great Britain, a government that he would have considered as an enemy prior to 1789, or that of her allies, illustrating the Vicomte's eagerness to return to service following his departure from the French service.

The Vicomte assured that he would be able to recreate the brigade swiftly, and that he would recruit his fellow colonels and the officers who had served under them, and described also their eagerness, zeal and fidelity. He offered an existing, experienced officer cadre, ready to be deployed, which he may have hoped made his proposal more appealing than raising and training a novice brigade. He requested permission to recruit in Ireland and financial support for recruitment, so that the corps could be formed without delay. However, this offer was evidently not accepted; though the government's response has not been found, it can be surmised that at this stage in the war, there was not a pressing need for new regiments. Furthermore, émigré regiments were not officially permitted in the British service at this point.

Two months earlier, another suggestion had been made by a Mr Felix McCarthy of Holles Street, London, to make use of the Irish Brigade. McCarthy suggested that the émigré officers, some of the 'best officers in Europe', be sent to the West Indies to reinforce French counter-revolutionaries.¹¹ He pointed out that this would not just benefit British military strategy, but also British policy in Ireland, and would 'cement the affection of the whole Catholic body in Ireland, and reflect immortal honour upon all those engaged in it.'¹² While McCarthy's suggestion was also not acted upon, the potential usefulness of the Irish Brigade in the West Indies would be reconsidered the following year. The debate over the improvement of Catholic rights, the 'Catholic Question,' which McCarthy alludes to, would

¹⁰ Walsh de Serrant to the Prime Minister, 5 Mar. 1793 (T.N.A., H.O. 42/25/26, ff 59-60).

¹¹ Letter of Felix McCarthy, 13 Jan. 1793 (T.N.A., H.O., 42/24/121-2).

¹² Ibid.

play an influential role in how the new brigade was formed and used. McCarthy's advice also indicates the importance of securing Catholic loyalty in Ireland in the face of imminent war.

Count O'Connell's offer

In 1794 Comte (Count) Daniel Charles O'Connell and a fellow Irish Brigade officer, Henry Dillon, also made an offer to the British government to raise a brigade of Catholic Irishmen for the British service, consisting of only Irish Catholics and officered by as many of the Franco-Irish officers of the former Irish Brigade of France as could be found. Count O'Connell was of the famed O'Connell family of Derrynane, County Kerry and uncle of Daniel 'the Liberator' O'Connell. He was an experienced officer with service in the old Irish Brigade, had commanded other regiments in the royal French army and, like many of the exiled officers of the Irish brigade, had sought refuge in London following the defeat of the Royalists.¹³

One of the sources for the Brigade is the biography of Count O'Connell written by Mary Anne O'Connell, wife to Count O'Connell's grand-nephew Morgan John O'Connell. This biography describes how, in a letter dated 12 March 1794, Count O'Connell wrote to his brother and close friend, Maurice 'Hunting Cap' O'Connell at Derrynane, describing difficulties in securing a definite decision from the British government regarding the proposed brigade:

It has been proposed to raise a Catholick [sic] or a mixed regiment in Ireland at the cost of the government, afterwards to form a corps of the French deserters on the continent, to serve under the Duke of York. These proposals were at first successively listened to with some appearance of favour, and have been from time to time repeatedly and strongly urged, yet no determination has been taken on the subject, which makes it probable, considering the advanced period of the season, that it has been condemned to oblivion.¹⁴

¹³ Count Daniel Charles O'Connell (1745–1833), *Dictionary of National Biography* (60 vols, Oxford, 2004), xli, pp 449-50.

¹⁴ O'Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, 146-7.

It is interesting to note that the initial Irish Brigade was envisaged as part of a larger corps of émigrés, as the eventual brigade would be a distinctly separate Irish formation.

In April 1794 an act of parliament was passed in Britain ‘to enable subjects of France to enlist as soldiers’ in the British armed forces, allowing the remnants of the Army of the Princes to continue their fight against the Republicans.¹⁵ It was argued in parliament that this act was the best way to rapidly increase British military manpower, and that the displaced French would have a genuine incentive to restore their monarchy and return home. This decision, when contrasted with the evident disinterest in Vicomte Walsh’s offer the previous year, signifies a change in British strategy, and the growing need for highly motivated soldiers, in particular in the wake of France’s *levée en masse*.

After the passing of the émigré act, Count O’Connell wrote again to Pitt, summarising his wishes and advocating the formation of a new brigade:

Gen. O’Connell after expressing to his Majesty’s Principal Minister in the strongest terms he was capable of, the earnest wishes of the officers of the *ci-devant* [former] Irish Brigade that they may be called into the service of their King and country, feels it to be a duty incumbent on him to deposit in the hands of W. Pitt this paper, as a solemn testimony and pledge of their sentiments to that purpose.¹⁶

Referencing the former Irish Brigade, Count O’Connell eloquently highlighted the ‘unshaken loyalty they so eminently displayed’ to Louis XVI, and also declared himself happy to accept any rank in the army, as long as he was able to see ‘Monarchy restored.’¹⁷ This language demonstrates how the Wild Geese, and Catholic, identity of the Irish Brigade could be utilised by the Irish officers to argue their case to British politicians, to assure the loyalty that such a corps would display to Britain.

¹⁵ *Journal of the House of Commons*, 7 Apr. 1794, p. 429; *The parliamentary history of England from the earliest period to 1803*, vol. xxxi 1794-1795 (London, 1818), p. 373.

¹⁶ Count O’Connell to Pitt, 17 Apr. 1794 (Cambridge University Library, Manuscript Collection, Add. 6958/1430).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Count O'Connell used flattery and praise of Pitt to further his objectives, urging Pitt that restoring such 'a body of able and experienced officers to their country and natural connections' would 'reflect no small honour on his administration.'¹⁸ He evidently recognised the advantages offered by Pitt's openness to émigré regiments in the British service. He may also have recognised that Catholic relief was an important political bargaining tool in Pitt's government, one that had the potential to strengthen Pitt's position, or weaken it if it didn't succeed. Count O'Connell's personal ambition is also evidenced in this letter; the new brigade would continue the Wild Geese tradition while also allowing him to continue his military career.

Britain accepts the offer

In August 1794 Count O'Connell reported to his brother that he expected a final decision to raise a brigade of Irish Catholics soon.¹⁹ He was proud to be a part of this historic unit but due to 'the existing laws of England,' and 'distrust' of the Irish government, there was a very important stipulation that would shape the future of the brigade; instead of garrison duty in Ireland or Britain, or fighting the forces of the French Republic in Europe, the brigade would 'be permanently employed in his Majesty's foreign Dominions, i.e. out of Europe, a distinction by which we shall be doomed never to enjoy the comfort of living amongst our friends.'²⁰ This was a tactic employed with other émigré regiments also, and was a means of securing overseas territories while also removing the perceived destabilising threat posed by French, and Catholic, regiments on British soil.²¹ Count O'Connell's displeasure at this decision is evident from his language. However, he recognised that a posting to a foreign dominion was not 'the most eligible one, yet better than none at all.'²²

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ O'Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, 150-1.

²⁰ Ibid., 151.

²¹ C. T. Atkinson, 'Foreign troops in the British army: part IV the West Indies' in *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, xxii (1944), pp 107-10.

²² O'Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, 151.

The parliamentary debates over the Irish Brigade would later manifest in a rather dramatic manner when the Duc de Fitzjames was involved in a pistol duel with Lord Blayney in the Phoenix Park in 1797, after Blayney made disparaging remarks about émigré officers in the Irish parliament.²³ Duelling was of course not uncommon in this period, especially amongst the gentry and military.²⁴ Fitzjames was ‘grazed by a ball in the side’ while another ball ‘went through Lord B’s hat’.²⁵ Although they ‘afterwards reconciled to each other and went from the ground good friends’, Blayney’s initial criticism of the Irish Brigade, which took place in parliament, illustrate the disdain of the Ascendancy for both Catholic and émigré officers.²⁶ However, Irish Protestants were not exclusively opposed to the Irish Brigade; Henry Grattan, the leading Irish political reformer, approved of the formation of the brigade, but thought it was a ‘presumptuous inconsistency’ to have a Catholic brigade of 6,000 armed men whilst Catholics were still excluded from parliament.²⁷ Sir William Smith, a supporter of Catholic relief, reminded the Irish House of Commons in 1794 that the men of the Irish Brigade were ‘staunch royalists, steadily resisting all republican seduction.’²⁸

This opposition between Westminster, where Pitt supported the formation of the Irish Brigade, and many Dublin politicians, who were members the Ascendancy and opposed arming members of the Catholic population, characterised Anglo-Irish politician relations for the latter half of the eighteenth-century. Members of the Irish Ascendancy occasionally pursued goals that did not align with those of the British authorities and in these instances, such political power struggles would have serious implications for the soldiers of the Irish Brigade.

²³ *Annual Register*, xxxix (1797), p. 9.

²⁴ James Kelly, *That damn'd thing called honour': duelling in Ireland, 1570-1860* (Cork, 1995), pp 200-14.

²⁵ *The Sporting Magazine*, vol. lx (London, 1798), p. 234.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Henry Grattan, *Speeches of the Rt. Hon. Henry Grattan*, edited by Henry Grattan (4 vols, London, 1822), iii, 255.

²⁸ *The parliamentary register; or, history of the proceedings and debates of the House of Commons of Ireland, 21 Jan.-25 Mar. 1794*, vol xiv (Dublin, 1795), p. 259.

Offers to the colonels

In September 1794, in a circular letter to the colonels of the former Irish Brigade in the French service, the British Home Secretary, the Duke of Portland, set out the terms of how the brigade would be formed, clearly indicating that the British crown and government held its fate in their hands.²⁹ Portland explained that the king, desiring to show his ‘affection and confidence’ in his Irish subjects who were Roman Catholics, had determined to re-establish the Irish Brigade.³⁰ The sincerity of ‘affection and confidence’ is debatable; George III later refused to grant emancipation to Catholics after the Act of Union which may suggest that the offer stemmed more from pragmatism than altruism.

Portland offered the colonels of the former brigade the same rank in the new corps. The brigade would initially consist of four regiments; three regiments of the former brigade and another under the command of Count O’Connell, in reward for his efforts in its establishment, with two more regiments added later. However, Count O’Connell’s biographer describes this appointment as colonel of the fourth regiment, rather than a more senior one, was somewhat less than Count O’Connell expected.³¹ The Comte and Vicomte Walsh de Serrant were also amongst the colonels appointed. This decision to form six regiments would prove problematic in terms of recruitment. Portland stated that the king wished that all field and other officers, apart from the colonels, be ‘natural born subjects of His Majesty’s Kingdom of Ireland.’³² However, the regular regiments and militia were also recruiting heavily in Ireland, and the demand for men was high.

A cadre of experienced officers was also sought so that the brigade could reach operational ability without delay. These officers would rank equally with the rest of the

²⁹ Portland to colonels of the late regiments of the Irish Brigade, 29 Sept. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O. 1/766, ff 245-9).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ O’Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, 142.

³² Portland to colonels of the late regiments of the Irish Brigade, 29 Sept. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 1/766, ff 245-9).

army, unlike other formations, such as the militia, whose officers were inferior to officers in the regulars. The colonels would recommend officers for the brigade and the king would favour those with previous service in the former brigade, as long as they had been born in Ireland.

Like the colonels, these officers appear to have been motivated by a strong family tradition of military service in the Irish Brigade. For example, Richard-Eduoard Sutton, Comte de Clonard, who was commissioned a captain in Count O'Connell's regiment, came from the Franco-Irish family the Suttons de Clonard, County Wexford who had recently established their nobility in France in 1763.³³ He, along with his brother Jacques-Jean-Eduoard, had previously served in the old Irish Brigade and the Army of the Princes.³⁴ His background is typical of many officers of the Irish Brigade, with a family tradition of military service to the French monarchy, and a genuine desire to continue this tradition of military service, even if that meant serving the one-time enemy of the French monarchy.

Not all officers of the old Irish Brigade transferred to the new Irish Brigade in the British service. Some joined the armies of other nations, such as a Major Roath who was reported to have gone to Russia,³⁵ most likely to join the Russian army, which was part of the alliance against France during this period. Count O'Connell himself, when it seemed unlikely that his offer to Britain would be accepted, had also contemplated enlisting in the Austrian army, as several Irish officers had done so.³⁶ Others were content to remain in the French republican army.³⁷ There is some evidence to suggest that not all officers were informed of the recreation of the Irish Brigade. In 1814 the *Freeman's Journal* reported that British forces, following Napoleon's abdication, had encountered in Paris several officers of the old Irish Brigade, who regretted not being able to serve the British throne as 'they were

³³ *London Gazette*, 14-18 July 1795; J. H. McGuckin, '18th and 19th century émigrés in France', in *Familia: Ulster Genealogical Review*, ii, no. 6 (1990), pp 26-32, at p. 27.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 29.

³⁵ Portland to Camden, 16 Mar. 1796 (N.L.I., K.P., 1003/174) .

³⁶ O'Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, 147.

³⁷ Martinz, 'Semper et ubique fidelis', p. 148.

not apprised of the step taken by a number of their comrades, who carried their homage to the foot of the Throne...for example Chevalier Jerningham...whose personal devotion to the cause of Royalty has not been less remarkable than that of all his family, whether in France or in England.³⁸

The terms also stipulated that no officers were to purchase or sell their commissions, signifying that the government wanted officers with experience and merit; ‘pecuniary considerations’ relating to commissions would not be tolerated.³⁹ The practice of ‘promotion by purchase’ was a problem for the entire British army, and the commander-in-chief, the Duke of York, would later seek to curtail it with the reforms described in Chapter 1.⁴⁰

Portland explicitly stated that the brigade would be considered ‘specially appropriated to serve in His Majesty’s West India Colonies, or any other of His Foreign Dominions.’⁴¹ Officers of all ranks were expected to serve with their units, wherever they may be. The politically motivated decision to send the Irish Brigade to the West Indies, in order to appease the Ascendancy, meant that the men would experience a great deal of hardship, due to the longer voyage, inhospitable climate and risk of tropical disease. The use of the brigade in the West Indies suggests that whilst the government saw the practical advantages of utilising the displaced émigré officers, it was important to employ them in a manner that would not upset the delicate stability of Ireland. The potential for destabilising Ireland came from both a Catholic-led uprising and a Protestant Ascendancy push for more independence, and Westminster was reluctant to isolate either group. The Irish Brigade was therefore caught between these competing concerns.

³⁸ *Freeman’s Journal*, 2 July 1814.

³⁹ Portland to colonels of the late regiments of the Irish Brigade, 29 Sept. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 1/766, ff 245-9).

⁴⁰ Portland to Camden, Sept. 1796 (N.L.I., K.P., 1004/45).

⁴¹ Portland to colonels of the late regiments of the Irish Brigade, 29 Sept. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 1/766, ff 245-9).

Portland also reminded the colonels that the regiments only existed on a yearly basis and could be disbanded if considered unworthy, unlike their previous position in the French service where they had served for about a century. Portland literally called for the ‘good behaviour’ of the colonels, which he warned was essential. He assured them of the goodwill of the king, and stated that if they wished to retire or transfer back to the French royal cause, the king would look kindly upon their resignation. Portland finished his letter with another assurance of ‘this unequivocal testimony of His Majesty’s good opinion and esteem.’⁴² The entire letter expressed respect for the colonels, yet there were constant reminders that the advantages offered were completely due to George III’s goodwill and that the colonels would serve under British terms. Portland’s letter illustrates the mixed social and political attitudes of the British government towards Ireland during this period; though respectful, the superiority of the British position was never in doubt to the politicians of Westminster.

One of the officers invited was the Duke of Fitzjames, commander of the old regiment of Berwick.⁴³ Fitzjames and his regiment had been the first to join the Army of the Princes, and had been praised for their loyalty.⁴⁴ The Duke later recalled how ‘the delicate manner in which this invitation was expressed made the Duke of Fitz-James consider it as a very signal favour on the part of his Britannic Majesty, and left him no room to hesitate one moment in accepting it.’⁴⁵ In January 1795 *Finn’s Leinster Journal* reported that,

The four regiments of the Irish Brigade, that for so many years fought against the family now on this throne, are to be formed into six regiments, to be raised immediately in Ireland, under the command of as many of the officers that belonged to that late corps as can be had. They are to be called *The Royal Irish Brigade* and are to be pure Catholic regiments, to have Catholic chaplains... They are to retain the facings and exact uniforms of the brigade as they were all the while in the service of France.⁴⁶

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ The Duke of Fitzjames was grandson of the Duke of Berwick, illegitimate son of James II of Britain. The Duc de Fitzjames, as he was known in France, considered himself the proprietor of the old Irish Brigade, as his grandfather had accompanied the Irish Brigade into exile in the 1690s.

⁴⁴ *Freemans Journal*, 19 Apr. 1814.

⁴⁵ O’Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, 182.

⁴⁶ *Finn’s Leinster Journal*, 10 Jan. 1795.

The reminder in the newspaper article of the brigade's Jacobite origins gives an indication of Protestant Ascendancy perceptions of the brigade; it was a purely Catholic Franco-Irish brigade, of which Protestant loyalists would not have been supportive. The retention of their original uniforms was also significant; the brigade had retained them since their arrival in France a century earlier and now these erstwhile redcoats were returning to the British service.

The challenge of recruitment

Once the decision had been made to establish the brigade, the colonels needed to start recruiting. However, by October 1794 Count O'Connell was expressing concern about recruiting enough men for the brigade.⁴⁷ The colonels appear to have been allocated different districts around Ireland to recruit, and in some cases in locations where the colonel's family came from. Count O'Connell feared that the Comte Conway and Vicomte Conway would end up competing for recruits in County Kerry, where they were both from.⁴⁸ Count Walsh de Serrant's 2nd Regiment requested barracks for his men in County Limerick and County Galway, while Colonel Dillon's regiment was headquartered in County Westmeath, where the Dillon family had its ancestral home.⁴⁹ Count O'Connell requested that New Ross be allocated to him as his regimental headquarters, but New Ross had already been allocated to the Vicomte Walsh de Serrant's regiment, and O'Connell was allocated alternative barracks in Tipperary and Waterford.⁵⁰

Recruitment proved difficult however, most likely due to their intended destination of the West Indies. Though a later letter indicates that the intended destination was unknown to the junior officers and rank and file, it was likely that some information had made its way

⁴⁷ O'Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, p. 153.

⁴⁸ O'Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, 153; 'Thomas Conway (1733-95)', Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (26 Apr. 2013).

⁴⁹ Handfield to Count Walsh de Serrant, 9 July 1795 (N.L.I., K.P. MS 1079/267); Handfield to Dillon, 9 Sept 1795 (N.L.I., K.P. MS 1080/29).

⁵⁰ Handfield to O'Connell, 22 April 1796 (N.L.I., K.P. MS 1080)..

from the colonels who knew the destination of their regiments, and men were unlikely to enlist if they knew that they were destined to endure a long ocean crossing, followed by a hostile climate and the danger of tropical disease.⁵¹ However, as many regular troops had already been diverted to fight the French in Europe, more men were needed to garrison the islands under British control. A number of high-ranking British politicians recognised that the West Indies offered an ideal opportunity to utilise the newly-announced Irish Brigade, while also removing them from the British Isles. In January 1795 Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, wrote to Portland extolling the virtues of sending Irish regiments to serve in the West Indies.⁵² He mentioned that the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Earl Fitzwilliam, was of a similar opinion that all Irish regiments should be sent from Ireland as soon as they were raised to the West Indies or other 'Foreign Dominions.'⁵³ Dundas stressed 'most earnestly' the importance of the Irish Brigade, as troops were urgently needed to strengthen the British positions at St. Domingo and to retake Guadeloupe.⁵⁴ As such, Dundas hoped that Portland would urge Fitzwilliam 'to afford every possible aid in completing this Brigade to its full amount, as it will enable us to without interfering with any other Service, to send out, the beginning of next autumn, a most important Reinforcement to the West Indies.'⁵⁵

Fitzwilliam's role in the establishment of the Irish Brigade

Dundas related that Fitzwilliam made 'frequent mention of the Irish Brigade' and talked 'doubtfully as to the success of it.'⁵⁶ Fitzwilliam was no doubt acutely aware of the potential problem of Protestant attitudes and opposition to its formation. The Irish militia, which will be discussed in the following chapter, was similarly distrusted by the Protestant Ascendancy due to its largely Catholic rank and file, but the mixed nature of the militia, commanded by

⁵¹ *The correspondence of Daniel O'Connell*, ed. M. R. O'Connell (8 vols, Dublin, 1973–80), i, 6

⁵² Dundas to Portland, 13 Feb. 1795 (T.N.A., Secretary at War Out-letters, H.O., 30/1, ff 200-6).

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Dundas to Portland, 13 Feb. 1795 (T.N.A., Secretary at War Out-letters, H.O., 30/1, ff 200-6).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

members of the Ascendancy themselves, meant they were more acceptable to Irish Protestants. The Ascendancy still feared an armed insurrection by Irish Catholics, reminiscent of the bloody wars and rebellions of the seventeenth-century.

Whilst Dundas' main concern seems to have been the practical use of the Irish Brigade, Fitzwilliam was also mindful of the political and religious significance of the corps. Despite Dundas' claim of his misgivings, Fitzwilliam wrote positively of the Irish Brigade on 15 January 1795, when he stated his wish to give the Irish Brigade a 'fair chance,' due to the 'Loyalty and Zeal of the Catholicks [sic].'⁵⁷ Evidently, Fitzwilliam was in favour of giving Catholics an opportunity to prove themselves after a century of penal laws that had restricted their rights. The phrase 'loyalty and zeal' would be widely used by British authorities to praise the Irish who served in the regular and amateur forces, ascribed to Catholics and Protestants alike. Though more closely associated with the loyalist tradition, evidently the phrase would be applied to Catholics too if they displayed their loyalty to the crown.

Whilst in favour of the brigade, Fitzwilliam was pragmatic enough to see potential difficulties with its establishment, and concerned himself with details regarding its formation. On 28 January he wrote to complain that many of the officers that had been offered places in the Irish Brigade had not yet reported for duty.⁵⁸ Another letter of the same day requested clarification on whether the Irish Brigade would remain on the Irish Establishment once they had finished recruiting or move to the English Establishment.⁵⁹ Fitzwilliam was also apprehensive about potential difficulties to recruitment and deployment 'due to their religion.'⁶⁰ Despite his earlier wish to give the Irish Brigade a 'fair chance', Fitzwilliam again expressed his doubts on 31 January when he stated 'though there will be

⁵⁷ Fitzwilliam, 15 Jan. 1795 (T.N.A., Secretary at War Out-letters, H.O., 30/1, f. 209).

⁵⁸ Fitzwilliam, 28 Jan. 1795 (T.N.A., Secretary at War Out-letters, H.O., 30/1, ff 209-10).

⁵⁹ Fitzwilliam, 28 Jan. 1795 (T.N.A., Secretary at War Out-letters, H.O., 30/1, f. 211).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

no hesitation or difficulty about advancing the money for the levy and temporary pay of the Irish Brigade, I am not able to induce the Country to undertake this Corps.⁶¹ Fitzwilliam continued by saying ‘how the Irish Brigade will turn out is more than I can pretend to say: I have my doubts – should it succeed, you must look upon it as a great effort of good will.’⁶²

Fitzwilliam’s mostly positive attitude towards the brigade reflects the greater challenges faced by high-ranking British politicians in regards to Ireland. More men were required for an ever increasing level of warfare, but the social and political situation in Ireland meant that establishing a purely Catholic brigade would inevitably cause problems, even when overseen by Fitzwilliam, who was in favour of improving the rights of Catholics.

Parliamentary difficulties and potential recruitment delays

By early 1795 parliament had still not finalised the terms upon which the brigade would be established, and Count O’Connell was getting increasingly frustrated with the lack of pace. Unlike Fitzwilliam and Dundas, Count O’Connell had a personal ambition to lead his men, as well as the more practical need for employment and money, as at this time, he was dependent on his brother, Maurice, for financial aid.

Recruitment continued to be prove difficult and Count O’Connell expressed concern in February 1795 that the bounty (the sum of money given to every recruit, as a cash incentive, upon enlistment in a regiment) was not sufficient to entice men to enlist in the brigade. He observed: ‘I shudder at the idea of the difficulties we shall encounter to get men, and from the present appearance of things, and the insufficiency of the bounty money, I very much fear we shall not be able to accomplish the thing.’⁶³

Some of the difficulties encountered by the brigade stem from the power struggle between the British and Irish governments. According to Count O’Connell, whilst

⁶¹ Fitzwilliam, 31 Jan. 1795 (T.N.A., Secretary at War Out-letters, H.O., 30/1, f. 212).

⁶² Fitzwilliam, 31 Jan. 1795 (T.N.A., Secretary at War Out-letters, H.O., 30/1, ff 213-4).

⁶³ O’Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, 157.

permission to recruit in Ireland had been granted by the British parliament, the administrators in Britain had not considered that an Act of Parliament in the Irish parliament was also required before recruitment could commence. This oversight, which caused significant delays, indicates that authority of the Irish parliament was not taken seriously by the administration in Britain, illustrating the kind of tensions that would eventually lead to the Irish parliament being dissolved and moved to Westminster in 1801. Count O'Connell recorded how the officers had to wait for the Irish parliament to sit on 24 March before permission could be officially granted, and he did not expect matters to be resolved until April at the earliest.⁶⁴ His suspicions were confirmed when Parliament adjourned until the 8 April without resolving the recruiting orders. This, combined with the removal of Fitzwilliam as Lord Lieutenant due to his favour of Catholic relief, did not bode well for the brigade.⁶⁵

Finally, Count O'Connell was called to London where he was informed that recruitment orders, also known as the beating orders, would be issued in June.⁶⁶ At this stage Count O'Connell confessed to his brother that he did not wish to accompany the brigade to the West Indies, his ambition being 'extinguished.'⁶⁷ Though Irish affairs and the Catholic Question were often used as political bargaining tools by Pitt and his government, practical military needs had been a significant factor in the British government's acceptance of the offer to reform the brigade. Yet the slow progress of the brigade in the Irish parliament illustrates how the opposition of the Ascendancy to an exclusively Catholic brigade prevented the brigade from forming and operating efficiently, and came to diminish the 'zeal' of these Wild Geese Catholics.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 161.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 163-4.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 166-7.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 167.

Recruitment begins

In the summer of 1795 Count O'Connell returned to Ireland to begin recruitment for the brigade. Mary O'Connell outlines the terms on which the Irish Brigade were raised, based on an undated memorandum, likely to have been from 1795. The terms indicate that the Irish Brigade was to be raised, equipped and paid very similarly to other infantry regiments, stipulating that, 'in regard to arms, accoutrements, pay, allowances, quarter, and to the issue of monies under those several heads, or for any other services not herein specified, these corps to be on the same footing and subject in all respects to the like regulations as His Majesty's other Regiments of Infantry on the Irish establishment.'⁶⁸ All officers were also entitled to half-pay if the brigade was reduced, in line with other army regiments. Despite the political arguments about the potential ramifications of establishing an Irish Brigade, it is evident that from a military perspective, their purpose was envisioned as little different from any other British infantry regiment.

Officers with previous experience in the former Irish Brigade in the French service were eligible to receive extra pay, back-dated to October 1794 when the political decision to form the brigade was taken:

The pay of the officers who have borne commissions in the Irish Brigade are to be allowed from 1st October, 1794. That of the rest of the commissioned officers to commence from the dates of the letters of service to the Colonels. The pay of the first-mentioned class of officers accruing between the 3rd October and the date of the letters of service to be issued without retaining the arrears, but after that period it must be subject to the same regulations as the pay of the Army in Ireland.⁶⁹

Charles Handfield, the Lord Lieutenant's secretary, later explained to the colonels that the backdating of their commissions was intended 'to assist those officers who were coming from the Continent' and the inclusion of this back-pay in the terms would have been an

⁶⁸ Ibid., 170-2.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 170-2.

added incentive to encourage veteran brigade officers to join the newly-formed brigade.⁷⁰ Officers who had not served in the former Irish Brigade in the French service, along with rank-and-file, would be paid from the date they actually joined the brigade.

Officers were not allowed to purchase or exchange commissions in any unit other than the brigade, which reflects broader policies in the British military instigated by the Duke of York, as discussed in the introduction. However, the Catholic officers were still permitted to purchase promotions in order to advance into other regiments on the Irish Establishment, as permitted by the Catholic Relief Act of 1793, excluding the rank of general or higher.⁷¹

The bounty money for a recruit in the Irish Brigade was set at £20, with no more than £15 actually going to the recruit. Assuming that memorandum was written in 1795, this figure is in line with the bounty for regular infantry recruits.⁷² Both types of regiment would have also been entitled to foreign service pay once they had departed their home country. William Wickham, superintendent at the Aliens Office and Britain's chief spymaster, informed Portland that the pay of the Irish Brigade was to be the same as that of the line regiments sent by Ireland on foreign service.⁷³ Therefore, there was likely to have been no financial difference between serving in the Irish Brigade and enlisting in a regular Irish regiment in the British army.

The brigade consisted of six regiments, each commanded by a colonel who was a former officer of the Irish Brigade in the French service. The ranking of the colonels would later prove troublesome, as there was no overall commander of the brigade. Normally a brigadier-general commanded a brigade but as Catholics were excluded from the rank of general, a brigadier-general could not be appointed to command the exclusively Catholic

⁷⁰ Handfield to commanding officers of the Irish Brigade, 17 Nov. 1796 (N.L.I., K.P., 1080)

⁷¹ McDowell, 'The age of the United Irishmen', pp 316-8.

⁷² Portland to Camden, 19 Mar. 1795 (N.L.I., K.P., 1003/38).

⁷³ Wickham to Portland, Apr. 1796 (N.L.I., K.P., 1003/180); 'Wickham, William (1761–1840)', Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (26 Apr. 2013).

brigade. The decision not to have an overall commander would prove fateful for the brigade; the colonels mostly concerned themselves with their own regiments, therefore there was nobody to lobby for the interests of the Irish Brigade as a whole.

Following the decision to issue recruitment orders, the commissions of the officers were published in the *London Gazette* in July 1795, with the commissions backdated from the 1 October 1794.⁷⁴ The first three regiments had existed in the French Irish Brigade, whilst the latter three were newly created for the British Irish Brigade. The ranking of the regiments and their colonels is listed below.

1st Regiment: Jacques Charles de Fitzjames, Duc de Fitzjames.

2nd Regiment: Comte Antoine Walsh de Serrant.

3rd Regiment: Chevalier Henry Dillon.

4th Regiment: Comte Daniel Charles O'Connell.

5th Regiment: Comte Thomas Conway, Vicomte Charles Walsh de Serrant (after 1795).

6th Regiment: James Henry Conway (Comte de Conway after 1795).⁷⁵

The colonels all had previous experience in the Irish Brigade in the French service, and some had served in other armies; Comte Thomas Conway was a veteran of the French and American armies, where he had commanded brigades at the battles of Germantown and Brandywine and criticised George Washington's abilities, and had also been a governor of Mauritius.⁷⁶ He was appointed to command the 5th regiment while his brother James Henry was appointed to command the 6th regiment. Thomas died in 1795 and the Vicomte Walsh de Serrant took command of his regiment, while James Henry took the title Comte Conway.⁷⁷ The Vicomte's older brother, Comte Antoine Walsh de Serrant was also appointed colonel of

⁷⁴ *London Gazette*, 14-18 July 1795.

⁷⁵ Murphy, *The Irish Brigades*, pp 30-3. See also Appendix 2.

⁷⁶ 'Thomas Conway (1733-95)', Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (26 Apr. 2013).

⁷⁷ O'Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, 178.

the 2nd regiment, and successfully supported the Vicomte's application for the command of the 5th regiment upon Conway's death.⁷⁸

Following the commissions and announcement of the beating orders the officers went about recruiting in Ireland. The date of review was fixed for 17 September, 1796.⁷⁹ The brigade was to be housed at the New Geneva barracks, located opposite Duncannon Fort at the mouth of Waterford Harbour.⁸⁰ It was here that the Brigade would muster before embarking for foreign service (Fig. 2.1). Due to the quite different religious beliefs of Catholics and Calvinists, Mary O'Connell described the location, due to its Calvinist origins, as 'curiously Anti-Popish.'⁸¹



Figure 2.1: Walls At New Geneva Barracks Near Waterford, 1998

(Waterford County Museum website)⁸²

Problems with recruitment and morale

As British Home Secretary, Portland played an important role in how the Irish Brigade was established and utilised. Like Fitzwilliam, Portland saw the political and religious

⁷⁸ Fitzwilliam to Portland, 5 Mar. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 35/18/332-4).

⁷⁹ O'Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, 179.

⁸⁰ New Geneva had been built as a colony for exiled Swiss Calvinists, but the Irish government was not willing to allow the colonists to govern themselves, as the Geneveans had demanded. Therefore the army took over the site and built barracks for troops. For further details see Hubert Butler, 'New Geneva in Waterford' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, lxxvii, no. 2 (1947), pp 150-5.

⁸¹ O'Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, 179.

⁸² Waterford County Museum website, image library (http://www.waterfordcountyimages.org/exhibit/web/DisplayImage/K03ay51cMOdkU/1/Walls_At_New_Geneva_Barracks_Near_Waterford.html) (11 Oct. 2013).

significance of allowing Catholics to serve in this brigade and was keen to stress the importance of Britain's goodwill towards Irish Catholics, framing practical military needs in a context of benevolent social reform. He wrote to Dundas in January 1796 reasoning that the reestablishment of an Irish Brigade demonstrated to Irish Catholics 'the sincerity of the good intentions of government towards them by offering them a useful means of profiting of the Act which enabled them to serve their country in a military capacity.'⁸³ He stated that the Catholics had been offered a very good opportunity as the corps had been 'exclusively reserved' for them.⁸⁴ Given that the act allowed Catholics to enlist and serve in any regiment, it is possible that Portland believed that Irish Catholics would not want to serve with Protestants and would instead prefer the exclusive regiment that had been established for them.

Portland also had reservations about the quality of the officers, making the valid point that some of them owed their reputation to 'antiquity and respectability of their families', as their positions in the old Irish Brigade in the French service had been hereditary, rather than for 'their professional experience and talents.'⁸⁵ While Walsh and Count O'Connell had praised their fellow officers in their letters to Pitt, their views must be considered subjective, as they no doubt had wished to portray the brigade in the best possible manner in order to get it re-established.

Portland was more pragmatic than Fitzwilliam and recognised that by ensuring that the brigade would not serve in the British Isles, the brigade could be useful to British military strategy without incurring the opposition of Irish Protestants, who would be averse to an armed Catholic corps serving in Ireland. The opposition of Irish Protestants was, according to Portland, a result of misguided prejudices. As previously highlighted, the military tradition was very strong amongst Irish Protestants, so it was unsurprising that they

⁸³ Portland to [Dundas], 17 Jan. 1796 (T.N.A., W.O., 1/768, ff 73-6).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

did not welcome the formation of an exclusively Catholic brigade with Jacobite ancestry, which they perceived as a 'religious dishonour' to Protestant values.⁸⁶

Portland could see that the opposition of the Ascendancy was an obstacle to the success of the brigade. The colonels were also not allowed to use their own money to raise or remove men, which Portland believed to be another factor contributing to 'the backwardness of these Corps.'⁸⁷ However, Portland was pragmatic, and urged the government against a 'hasty abandonment of a measure, which, if it can be carried into effect, will be likely in my opinion to be very productive of very beneficial permanent and increasing advantages to this government.'⁸⁸

In an era of increasing warfare, the Catholic brigade provided much needed manpower and was clearly useful from a military perspective. However, their exclusively Catholic nature along with their Jacobite history meant that they also had political significance, which could not be ignored if the British government wished to maintain the cooperation of the Ascendancy. The solution, as already outlined, was again reinforced in Portland's letter; by 'not suffering any part of the Brigade to serve either in Gt Britain or Ireland,' he 'hoped also to have made the provision for them without awakening the jealousies or shocking the prejudices of their Protestant Countrymen.'⁸⁹ Initially, some of the brigade were to be deployed slightly closer to home; however, Portland later informed Camden that the two regiments of the Irish Brigade that had been previously assigned to Gibraltar would now to be sent to Jamaica instead.⁹⁰

In addition to external opposition from the Ascendancy, the brigade also had to contend with internal difficulties. The order of precedence of the regiments within the brigade was an issue that caused problems amongst the colonels. Portland informed Camden

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Portland to Camden, 11 Mar. 1796 (N.L.I., K.P., 1003/175).

in April that ‘the battalions are to rank in the same order as when in French service.’⁹¹

However, Comte James Henry Conway, colonel of the sixth regiment of the brigade, requested that the number of his regiment be changed in July 1796.⁹² Given his experience, it is likely that Conway did not appreciate holding the most junior regiment. His letter was laid before the king and his request declined. Portland explained:

The rank of the regiments composing the Irish Brigade was determined at the time of nomination of the colonels and on the uniforms being fixed on, the buttons were numbered as they now stand by the express order of His Majesty. The rank of the officers therefore now commanding the regiments has nothing got to do with the seniority of the regiments as they must rank according to their original institution.⁹³

The order of seniority was clarified in a subsequent letter from Portland to Camden in August 1796. The regiment of the Duc de Fitzjames ranked first, followed by that of Comte Walsh-Serrant, then Dillon’s, Count O’Connell’s, Vicomte Walsh-Serrant’s and Conway’s, and the buttons of the uniforms worn by the men bore the number of their regiment.⁹⁴

These debates indicate that the command structure of the brigade was an issue amongst the officers of the brigade. However, it is important to note that this internal brigade issue was strongly linked to the broader political and social context. The colonels’ previous, and often higher, ranks from their French service did not count in British service, where they had all been commissioned as colonels.⁹⁵ None of the officers within the Brigade were overall commander of the brigade as they were all Catholic and therefore could not hold a rank higher than colonel in the British army.⁹⁶ This is another example of political manoeuvring interfering with military needs, as the lack of an overall commander inevitably damaged unit cohesion.

⁹¹ Portland to Camden, 14 Apr. 1796 (N.L.I., K.P., 1003/179).

⁹² Portland to Camden, 12 July 1796 (N.L.I., K.P., 1004/7).

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Portland to Camden, 17 Aug. 1796 (N.L.I., K.P., 1004/33).

⁹⁵ *London Gazette*, 14-18 July 1795.

⁹⁶ O’Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, 141.

Reorganisation of the brigade

In April 1796 John King, Permanent Under-Secretary to the Home Department, wrote to Thomas Pelham, Chief Secretary for Ireland, informing him that the ships sent to Cork for conveying two regiments of the Brigade destined for Jamaica had been selected; *Weymouth*, *Lady Jane*, *Adventure* and *Traveller*.⁹⁷ King detailed that these ships were capable of carrying 1173 men in total, enough for the two regiments which would have reckoned at just under 1080 men combined.⁹⁸ King does not indicate which two of the six regiments were being sent to Jamaica.

However, by September 1796 the decision had been made to draft the men from the 1st, 4th and 6th regiments into the 2nd, 3rd and 5th regiments in order to bring these regiments up to strength.⁹⁹ Later letters in 1797 refer to Conway purchasing men for his regiment, suggesting that the remaining regiments were not entirely disbanded but rather were put in cadre, with the officers retained to begin recruiting again when required.¹⁰⁰ This was a practical economic move, as it made more financial and administrative sense to have one full strength regiment than several part-filled regiments. The officers of the drafted regiments were to be put on half-pay in September 1796 and the drafted regiments would cease to exist.¹⁰¹ These officers included the colonels Fitzjames (nominal head of the old Irish Brigade), Count O'Connell (the principal driving force behind the establishment of the new Irish Brigade) and Conway.¹⁰² This stark pragmatism indicates that the history and identity of the Irish Brigade did not factor in how it was treated as a military unit; the British authorities were more interested in the military and economic considerations of the brigade than the social and political aspect of its establishment.

⁹⁷ King to Pelham, 21 Apr. 1796 (N.L.I., K.P., 1003/182).

⁹⁸ Martinz, 'Semper et ubique fidelis', p. 146.

⁹⁹ Murphy, *The Irish Brigades*, pp 30-3; O'Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, 179.

¹⁰⁰ French to Brownrigg, 29 Mar. 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1004/111).

¹⁰¹ O'Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, 184.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 180.

Fitzjames, who considered himself to be the most senior of the officers of the old brigade, expressed his indignation at this reorganisation in late September 1796:

The Duke of Fitz-James would be less concerned on this occasion were not the fate of others inevitably involved with his own. He cannot possibly persuade himself that, after the generous Invitation of his Britannic Majesty, which made him abandon every other pursuit, and place all his hopes in England, he will be reduced to the Half-pay of £150 for himself, the Duchess of Fitz-James, and a numerous Family.¹⁰³

Fitzjames also recognised the financial trouble that many émigré officers found themselves in during the wars, the Revolution cutting off access to their resources and wealth in France.

The 2nd, 3rd and 5th regiments retained their numbers and ranking and were destined for the West Indies. Charles Grenville, Under Secretary of State for the Home Department, wrote to William Elliot, military under-secretary at Dublin Castle, on 8 September 1796, confirming Camden's request for transport for the Irish Brigade at Waterford.¹⁰⁴ At least some of the officers brought their families also; an Admiralty Minutes Book records that on 19 September 1796, the brig *Henrietta* arrived at Waterford from Dublin, carrying ten officers and one hundred and thirty-three men of the 1st Regiment, as well as thirty-two women and sixteen children.¹⁰⁵

Interestingly, the brigade's destination was unknown to the men and junior officers. Maurice Morgan O'Connell, nephew to Count O'Connell and a junior officer in the Irish Brigade, wrote to his brother Daniel 'the Liberator,' in November 1796 whilst on board a ship about to leave Irish waters.¹⁰⁶ Maurice had been commissioned an ensign in his uncle's regiment, and later a lieutenant, but would die on active service in St. Domingo in 1796.¹⁰⁷ Maurice wondered about their intended destination, believing it to be the Mediterranean, and

¹⁰³ Ibid., 185.

¹⁰⁴ Grenville to Elliot, 8 Sept. 1796 (N.L.I., K.P., 1004/35).

¹⁰⁵ Transport Board minutes, 19 Sept. 1796 (T.N.A., Admiralty Records, (A.D.M.), 108/39/331).

¹⁰⁶ *The correspondence of Daniel O'Connell*, ed. M. R. O'Connell (8 vols, Dublin, 1972–80), i, 26.

¹⁰⁷ *London Gazette*, 14 July 1795 and 27 Aug. 1796; O'Connell, *The last colonel*, ii, 190; *The correspondence of Daniel O'Connell*, i, 6.

informed his brother that their orders were to be opened only when at sea.¹⁰⁸ Evidently, the senior officers were aware of how unappealing a long voyage to the West Indies would be to many of the men and officers, and by withholding this information until at sea, they effectively removed the option of deserting.

ACTIVE SERVICE ABROAD AND PROBLEMS AT HOME (1797-1798)

Arrival in the West Indies

The three regiments of the Irish Brigade selected for foreign service began to arrive in the West Indies in February 1797, which indicates that they must have left Ireland in about November or December 1796. Walsh de Serrant's 2nd Regiment arrived in Martinique whilst Dillon's and the Vicomte Walsh's regiments were both initially stationed in Jamaica.¹⁰⁹

The long voyage had a deteriorating effect on the health of the regiments. Sir Ralph Abercromby, Commander-in-Chief of British forces in Trinidad wrote to William Huskisson, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for War on 20 February 1797 describing how 'the Irish Regiment' were 'already one half in the hospital, or on the invalid list'.¹¹⁰ He observed that 'it is in vain to send such troops' though it is unclear whether he was referring specifically to the newly recruited Irish troops or to European troops in general, who inevitably had difficulty adjusting to conditions in the West Indies.¹¹¹ Abercromby was also perhaps being critical of British strategy in the use of troops, a tendency which would later force him to resign as Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, after a serious condemnation of the fighting effectiveness of the troops on the Irish Establishment.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ *The correspondence of Daniel O'Connell*, i, 6.

¹⁰⁹ Rene Chartrand, *Émigré troops in British service vol. 1: 1793-1802* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 17-8.

¹¹⁰ Abercromby to Huskisson, 20 Feb. 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1004/119).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Nelson, *The Irish militia*, pp 176-9.

It was almost inevitable that any British regiment sent to the West Indies would succumb to disease due to the long sea voyage. On arrival, the troops would face an inhospitable climate, as well as tropical diseases. An Inspector Young expressed his grave concerns for the health of the Irish Brigade to the Army Medical Board in February 1797.¹¹³ Young described how Walsh de Serrant's 2nd Regiment arrived at St. Pierre, Martinique 'in a situation beyond all description – they buried on the passage 36, landed at Barbados 246 sick and upwards of 100 here.'¹¹⁴ Young reported that, prior to their departure, they had not been provided with 'medicine, instruments or hospital bedding, all of which I instantly supplied on their arrival.'¹¹⁵ The poor equipping of the brigade may be indicative of the wider economic pressures that the British army faced in an era of increasing militarisation both in Europe and in her overseas dominions.

With about 350 sick and 36 dead the brigade was short nearly 400 men, almost an entire regiment. These problems would result in the regiments being forced to merge together into a single regiment in order to maintain some level of usefulness to the British commanders in the West Indies. The Irish Brigade saw active service in St. Domingo, modern day Haiti, as part of the British forces under Lieutenant-Colonel Simcoe fighting the French forces under the command of the former slave-turned-revolutionary leader Toussaint Louverture. Dillon's 3rd Regiment was active in the attack on French positions in San Domingo in April 1797, where Captain Haley was wounded while 'driving the Enemy from their ambuscade above Port Guerin.'¹¹⁶ Also in April a number of convalescent soldiers of the Irish Brigade were involved in a raid on the Spanish fort at Trujillo, Honduras, where

¹¹³ Young to Army Medical Board, 13 Feb. 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1004/135).

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ *London Gazette*, 11-15 July 1797. This was not the first regiment of Dillon to have served in the West Indies. A battalion of 629 French and Franco-Irish men of the old regiment of Dillon in the French service had been sent out by Revolutionary France to San Domingo in 1792, where it had subsequently defected to the British side. By 1796 disease and desertion, as well as actual combat, had reduced its numbers to just twenty men and the battalion was disbanded prior to the arrival of the newly raised Dillon's 3rd Regiment of the Irish Brigade in the British service. For further details see Martinz, 'Semper et ubique fidelis,' pp 144-5.

they assisted in the spiking of eight guns and recapture of a transport ship.¹¹⁷ Walsh's regiment moved from Martinique to Jamaica in July 1797 before sending companies to Honduras and St. Domingo.¹¹⁸

Further recruitment difficulties and reorganisation

British military strategy required that regiments be sent to the West Indies to secure British trade routes and disrupt French ones. However, it does not seem that the British government gave these regiments much encouragement as they faced this difficult mission, beyond an increase in pay for foreign service. The perception soldiers in the British service had of the West Indies is evidenced by the mutiny, in 1795, of companies of the 105th and 113th Regiments of Foot, along with the 104th and 111th Regiments, on learning they were being sent there.¹¹⁹ Dundas admitted to Portland that 'experience teaches us that, if possible, all regiments destined for the West Indies be first seasoned in Gibraltar,'¹²⁰ but admitted that the current situation required all regiments to be immediately sent to where they were needed. Evidently there was not time for the Irish Brigade to be 'seasoned' in Gibraltar and the rising level of warfare was putting the British war machine under great strain.

Following the departure of the first three regiments, the destination of the Irish Brigade was now known to be the West Indies and subsequently, recruitment in Ireland through 1797 was slow; men would have naturally preferred either service at home with the Irish militia or yeomanry, or service in Europe with the regular regiments. Furthermore, many of these other Irish regiments served without any major sectarian troubles indicating that Catholic and Protestants were able to serve side by side with little difficulty, as will be illustrated in the other chapters of this thesis. An Irish soldier therefore had a number of options available to him, as all regiments were eager to recruit new men. Thus it is possible

¹¹⁷ Fortescue, *History of the British army*, iv, part one, 544.

¹¹⁸ Chartrand, *Émigré troops in British service*, p. 17.

¹¹⁹ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 31, 156.

¹²⁰ Dundas to Portland, 13 Feb. 1795 (T.N.A., H.O. 30/1 ff 200-6).

that many men actively chose not to enlist in the brigade and instead enlisted in other regiments that had not been allocated for overseas service.

Conway even attempted to purchase recruits from another officer, Lieutenant-Colonel-Commandant Trench of the Galway Militia, who wrote to Robert Brownrigg, military secretary to the Duke of York, in March 1797, explaining that he did not have the money to pay his men in his regiment and he had wished to sell recruits to Conway. Trench claimed that ‘nothing but the want of funds would have induced me to hand over my men in such a manner.’¹²¹ However, the government intervened as it did not approve of such measures, which damaged unit cohesion and morale. An enclosed letter from Pelham to Trench stated that these transactions were not permitted as it would set a precedent for other regiments to purchase recruits.¹²² Trench was ordered to return the men and his financial difficulties would be resolved, while Conway had to find recruits elsewhere.

In April 1797, as disease continued to reduce the number of effectives in the regiments in the West Indies, Portland informed Camden that the three battalions of the Irish brigade serving in the West Indies had been instructed to merge into one, and that the same should be carried out by the three regiments that remained in Ireland.¹²³ It would appear that these three remaining regiments in Ireland were the regiments that had earlier been drafted, but had recommenced recruiting. Portland drew upon the reports of Abercromby and Young, cited previously, in order to illustrate the serious reduction in number of effectives in the brigade due to tropical disease and the harsh ocean crossing, and explained that the decision was ‘judged expedient, with a view to a diminution of the publick [sic] expenditure.’¹²⁴

He ordered that the largest battalion would absorb the other two and go to Cork, where shipping would be arranged to Halifax, Nova Scotia and that ‘the accounts of the

¹²¹ French to Brownrigg, 29 Mar. 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1004/111).

¹²² Pelham to French, 25 Mar. 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1004/112-3).

¹²³ Portland to Camden, 10 Apr. 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1004/118).

¹²⁴ Ibid.

reduced battalions should be settled as soon as possible, and the officers of them are to be placed on half-pay.’¹²⁵ Obviously, lifting the conditions regarding where the brigade could serve would have been very likely to improve recruitment, making the brigade a more useful and efficient military unit. However, the British government continued to restrict the brigade to foreign dominions out of concern for Irish Protestants reactions. This political interference in the brigade’s operation would not have helped relationships between the Franco-Irish émigré officers and the Irish Ascendancy.

Challenges faced by Conway’s Regiment

Conway’s sixth regiment was the regiment in Ireland that was ordered to absorb the numbers of the other two regiments, the 1st and 4th, before its departure. However, Portland wrote to Camden on 30 June 1797, complaining that the vessels assigned to convey the regiment from Waterford to Halifax were still in port. The king wished the regiment to be sent immediately, thus avoiding an expensive delay.¹²⁶ The Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, Earl Carhampton, replied to Pelham that the regiment was awaiting a new shipment of arms before departing, illustrating the logistical problems that faced all regiments.¹²⁷ The British and Irish governments were struggling to equip the army, navy and auxiliary forces, which highlights the economic costs of the wars on both governments.

George III ordered the immediate departure of the 6th regiment from Waterford to Halifax (via Cork) and that the major of the regiment, James Conway (quite likely a relation of Colonel Conway), return to his regiment from his current place on General Dalrymple’s staff, ‘as it is not thought proper that the above regiment should be left without any field officers whatsoever.’¹²⁸ This would suggest that both Colonel Conway and Comte Sutton de Clonard, who was now lieutenant colonel of the 6th regiment, were indisposed and would not

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Portland to Camden, 30 June 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1004/144).

¹²⁷ Carhampton to Pelham (N.L.I., K.P., 1013/297-8).

¹²⁸ Portland to Camden, 17 July 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1004/153).

be accompanying the brigade overseas.¹²⁹ Evidently, it was not only the rank and file that were reluctant to join a regiment that was destined for the West Indies; even the officers were reticent to make themselves available for such a posting. However, the absence of senior field officers was not a problem unique to the Irish Brigade. The field officers of many militia regiments were also M.P.s and county governors and were often called away by their civilian duties and left their regiments with only one field officer or even just a junior officer in command.¹³⁰

The convoy eventually got underway but suffered setbacks almost immediately. Carhampton reported that the regiment, embarked on the ships at Waterford for so long a period, had become 'sickly' and thirty three men had to be disembarked and sent to the Donegal Militia's surgeon, along with their own surgeon.¹³¹ Bad weather also forced five of the six transport vessels back into Waterford harbour.¹³² The convoy stopped off in Cork where William Stafford, Chief Surgeon of Forces in Halifax, reported to Conway, that the health of the men was becoming a cause of concern.¹³³ Stafford warned that they were 'not well clothed' and had 'been already more than two months embarked.'¹³⁴ He requested that the regiment be 'immediately furnished' with the necessary supplies on a foreign service, and also suggested oil, vitriol and nitre to fumigate the ships.¹³⁵ Conway also complained to Dr. G. Renny, Director General of Hospitals and Chief of the Medical Board, that the men had 'suffered considerably by being so long embarked previous to their sailing.'¹³⁶ Carhampton then communicated these issues to Elliot at Dublin Castle.¹³⁷

¹²⁹ *London Gazette*, 14-18 July 1795, 12 Apr. 1796.

¹³⁰ See Chapter 4 for more details.

¹³¹ Carhampton to Elliot, 12-14 Aug. 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1013/327-9).

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Stafford to Conway, 20 Aug. 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1013/344-5).

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Stafford to Conway, 20 Aug. 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1013/344-5).

¹³⁶ Conway to Renny, 29 Aug. 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1013/343).

¹³⁷ Carhampton to Elliot, 1 Sept. 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1013/342).

Desertion amongst the rank-and-file appears to have been a major concern, given that the men were kept embarked for two months, at the expense of their health and fitness to serve. While the destination of Nova Scotia was not as dangerous as the West Indies, the long voyage was no less hazardous. The British government were clearly aware that their decision to send the brigade far from Europe could lead to increased desertion, and were taking steps to prevent this; if the men were embarked, it was much more difficult for them to desert than if they were waiting in barracks.

The morale of the regiment was further damaged by last-minute confusion regarding where they were to be sent. Portland wrote to Camden on 16 October 1797, reporting the king's directions that 'the transports having on board that part of the Irish Brigade which remains in health, instead of going to Halifax, for which they have been hitherto destined, shall proceed, with the first fair wind, to the Bermuda Islands where they are to be landed.'¹³⁸ However, this radical change of destination did not come into effect. Carhampton explained to Portland on the 31 October 1797 that his letter had arrived too late and the convoy had already sailed.¹³⁹

THE END OF THE IRISH BRIGADE (1798)

Conway's regiment would have arrived in Nova Scotia in early 1798. While service in the West Indies proved especially challenging for the Irish Brigade, there is no documentation of their activities on reaching Nova Scotia; given that it was not a site of military action until 1812 when Britain went to war with the United States, it is likely that Conway's regiment mostly undertook garrison duties there.

¹³⁸ Portland to Camden, 16 Oct. 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1004/181).

¹³⁹ Carhampton to Portland, 31 Oct. 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1014/36).

In 1798 the diminishing numbers in the brigade prompted the British government to order the disbandment of the Irish Brigade. Dillon's 3rd regiment departed San Domingo in June 1798 and disbanded upon arrival in Britain, whilst the other remaining regiments of the Irish Brigade left their stations in October and were disbanded at Chatham, England, on Christmas Day 1798.¹⁴⁰ The rank and file were transferred to other regiments in the British army, demonstrating the practical way the British government made use of the Irish Brigade, even after its disbandment.

The officers who had joined the brigade either retired or transferred to other regiments. Some had retired, like Count O'Connell, and were able to return to France following the brief cessation of hostilities in 1802. Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Sutton also returned to France after the wars, retiring to Paris where he died in 1834.¹⁴¹ Their desire to return to France indicates the strength of the Franco-Irish military tradition; though they fought in an Irish brigade and clearly valued their Irish heritage, these men considered France to be their homeland. Richard Sutton's son, Charles-Richard Sutton, also carried on the family tradition of military service, joining the French army where he gained the rank of general and was awarded the Legion d'Honneur, serving in Algeria and the Crimea.¹⁴²

Some of the officers who continued in military service rose to prominence in the following years. Charles McCarthy, for example, was commissioned a captain lieutenant in the 5th regiment of the Irish Brigade and later became a brigadier general and governor in West Africa, killed fighting the Ashanti in 1824.¹⁴³ Nicholas Trant, captain in the Irish Brigade, served in the British army in the Peninsula under Wellington, and subsequently transferred to the Portuguese service where he rose to Brigadier-General and military

¹⁴⁰ Murphy, *The Irish Brigades*, pp 30-3.

¹⁴¹ *London Gazette*, 12 April 1796; *The Analyst*, i, (London 1834) p. 228.

¹⁴² McGuckin, '18th and 19th century émigrés in France', p. 29.

¹⁴³ *London Gazette*, 14-18 July 1795; *American missionary register*, v (1824), p. 314.

governor of Oporto.¹⁴⁴ He was made a Knight Commander of the Royal Portuguese Military Order of the Tower and Sword in 1811.¹⁴⁵ Henry Dillon was appointed colonel of the 101st Irish Regiment of Foot, elected an MP, and later in 1813 became the 13th Viscount Dillon.¹⁴⁶ Maurice O'Connell, a relation of Count O'Connell, went to serve in a number of regiments and as lieutenant-governor of New South Wales.¹⁴⁷

On the one hand, it could be argued that after almost two years of service in the West Indies and Nova Scotia, the regiments of the Irish Brigade had been reduced by disease, desertions and casualties and was no longer at effective strength to continue in service. On the other hand, it is quite likely that the United Irishmen rebellion in 1798 would have exacerbated existing Protestant opposition to the exclusively Catholic Brigade. The time for giving the Catholics a 'fair chance' was running out, and both the British and Irish authorities were beginning to favour Irish units with a more Protestant and loyalist identity, such as the yeomanry.

CONCLUSIONS

Whilst Pitt's Irish Brigade may not have achieved the same impressive list of battle honours as the old brigade in the French service it still remains an important Franco-Irish unit in the British service, marking the final chapter in the history of the Wild Geese. The Franco-Irish officers of the Irish Brigade were committed to seeing the Republic, and later Napoleon, defeated so they could see their monarchy and their homes restored. The eloquent offers by the officers extolling the 'unshaken loyalty' and virtues of recreating this proud brigade

¹⁴⁴ 'Sir Nicholas Trant (1769–1839)', Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (29 Apr. 2013).

¹⁴⁵ *London Gazette*, 22 Oct. 1811.

¹⁴⁶ *Debrett's peerage of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (2 vols, London 1828), ii, 747; Henry Augustus Dillon-Lee, 13th Viscount Dillon (1777-1832), *The complete peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom* (13 vols, London, 1916), iv, 361.

¹⁴⁷ 'Maurice Charles Philip O'Connell (1768–1848)', Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (26 Apr. 2013).

eventually won over the British politicians who saw the symbolic value of recreating the Irish Brigade as a purely Catholic unit.¹⁴⁸ Even at the early stages of their conception and establishment, the brigade was marked for colonial service, a harshly pragmatic decision extolled by Dundas in order to kill three birds with one stone; make a gesture of goodwill towards Irish Catholics, remove the Irish Brigade in order to appease Ascendancy sensitivities and finally augment the West Indies garrison that was in constant need of reinforcement. The long journey and service far from home (Fig. 2.2-3) proved to be a major obstacle in the successful development of the brigade.

¹⁴⁸ Count O'Connell to Pitt, 17 Apr. 1794 (Cambridge University Library, Manuscript Collection, Add.6958/1430).

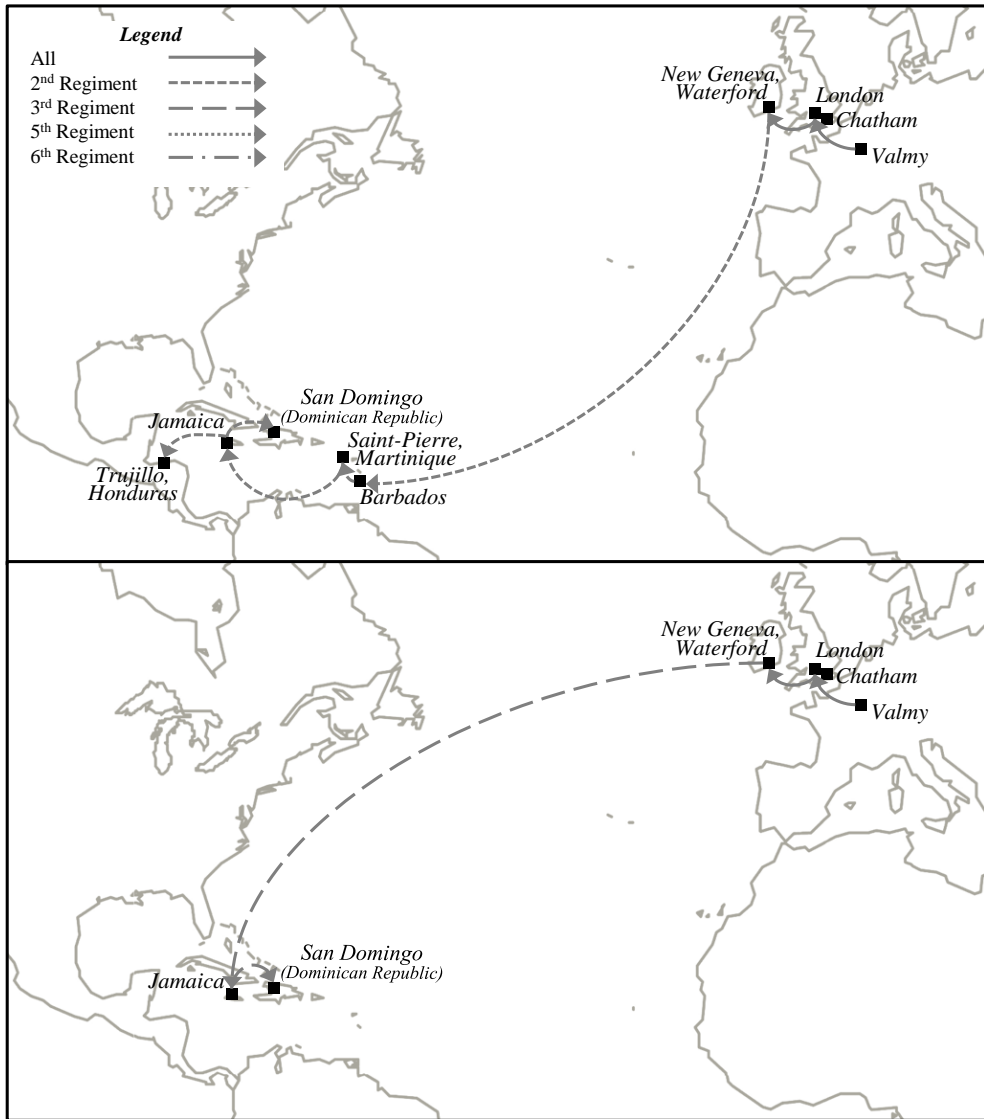


Fig. 2.2: Movements of Pitt's Irish Brigade, 2nd and 3rd Regiments (1792-98)

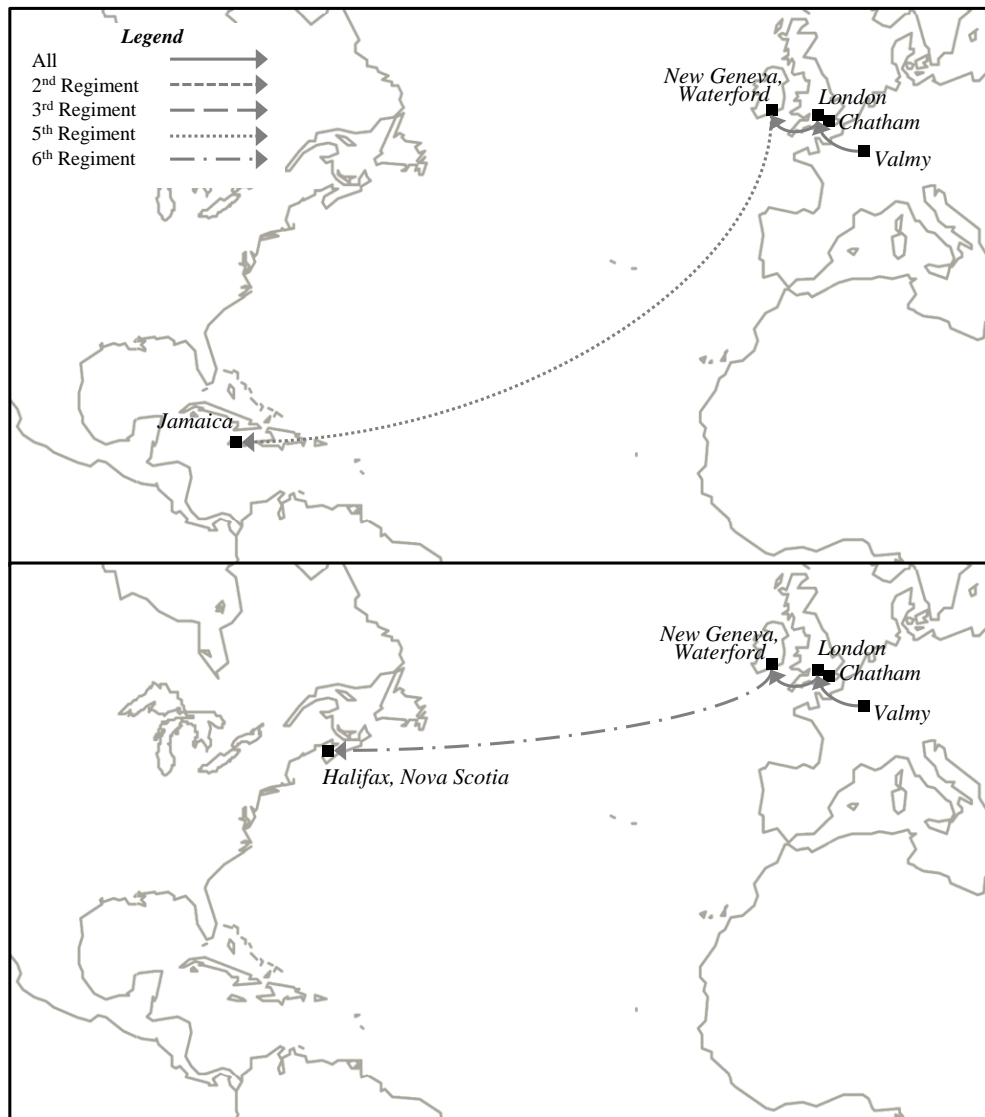


Fig. 2.3: Movements of Pitt's Irish Brigade, 5th and 6th Regiments (1792-98)

A very important aspect of the Irish Brigade was its strong Irish identity, which it had fostered in the service of France. Now this identity, which had for over a century had been closely associated with France, now began to be more closely associated with the British service. The Irish Brigade offered a continuation of service for the Franco-Irish officers and their ancestors who had served the French Bourbon monarchy since the 1690s and kept alive the military tradition of the Wild Geese for a while longer, yet ultimately Pitt's Irish Brigade marked the end of the old Wild Geese tradition. However, the memory of this tradition remained a powerful and romantic symbol of Irish Catholic fighting spirit, and was celebrated by nationalists and others during the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries.

W. B. Yeats, lamenting the lack of any Irish national spirit in his poem *September 1913*, pondered, ‘was it for this the wild geese spread the grey wing upon every tide?’¹⁴⁹

After the disbandment of the brigade, Franco-Irish military ties would continue but in a markedly different form; another later wave of Irish immigration to France resulted in the establishment by Napoleon of the Irish Legion in 1803, officered mostly by United Irishmen who had left Ireland in the late 1790s.¹⁵⁰ This formation was ideologically quite different to the pro-Royalist Irish Brigade of the eighteenth-century, not to mention the fact that most of the rank and file were neither Irish nor French, but a mix of other nationalities. The Protestant Ascendancy, accustomed to a monopoly on military tradition, did not welcome an exclusively Catholic brigade, especially one with its own long tradition of military service. This tradition, combined with the perceived threat of Catholic nationalism, clashed with that of the Protestant Ascendancy.

The formation of the brigade was one of the earliest efforts made by Pitt’s government to reconcile Irish Catholics and harness the vast source of manpower that Ireland offered and Britain sorely needed, indicating that the goodwill of the British government towards Irish Catholics had a pragmatic dimension. However, it can be concluded that the British government’s initial support for émigré regiments, as well as Irish Catholics, was tempered by the reluctance of the Irish Ascendancy’s to accept an exclusively Catholic Irish Brigade. Ultimately, although the Catholic Relief Act had officially opened the armed forces to Catholic soldiers, the effectiveness of the brigade as a military formation was critically damaged by the embargo on service in Europe and the absence of an overall commander, both problems that stemmed from Protestant distrust of Catholics in the military. Religion had played a major part in the origins of the Irish Brigade in the French service, and again during its reestablishment in the British service and also in its eventual demise, as Pitt and

¹⁴⁹ *Irish Times*, 8 Sept. 1913.

¹⁵⁰ Nicholas Dunne-Lynch, ‘The Irish Legion of Napoleon, 1803-1815’ in Genet-Rouffiac and Murphy, *Franco-Irish military connections* (Dublin, 2009), pp 189-218.

his ministers chose to accommodate the prejudices of the Protestant Ascendancy. Whilst the rebellion of 1798 was seen by some as proof of the danger of arming Catholics, the vast majority of Irish Catholics served loyally in their regiments throughout the period of the wars, highlighting that the threat associated with the formation of an exclusively Catholic brigade was most likely unfounded.¹⁵¹

The usefulness of Irish Catholics in a military capacity would be reconsidered in the early twentieth century. In 1918 the British army was again under severe pressure to source enough men for a war in Europe and once again the Catholic population offered potentially useful opportunities. As an alternative to the unpopular plan for conscription, the ‘Hay Plan’ (named after the British army captain who conceived it) proposed to offer Irish Catholics the chance to enlist in the French army as labourers, with French and Irish bishops encouraging this enlistment.¹⁵² However, diplomatic mistakes, including Hay speaking to the French Cardinal Amette but not the French prime minister Clemenceau, and rivalry in Ireland between the clergy and Sinn Féin, caused the plan to collapse, just as the Irish Brigade had ran afoul of political manoeuvring.¹⁵³

The example of the Hay Plan reinforces the idea that British politicians were often willing to make offers and concessions to Irish Catholics, but it must be remembered that these gestures were designed to be reciprocal; the loyalty of Irish Catholics was very important when British stability was threatened by a foreign aggressor. It can be concluded that the British government during the French Revolutionary wars was preoccupied with the broader political problem of Irish stability amid Catholic-Protestant tensions, and thus failed to fully harness the military benefits, and symbolic value, of the Irish brigade. As the eighteenth-century drew to a close, and more and more Catholics began to enlist in the

¹⁵¹ See Ch. 3 on the Irish militia for more details.

¹⁵² Alan J. Ward, ‘Lloyd George and the 1918 Irish conscription crisis’ in *Hist. Jn.*, xvii, no. 1 (1974), pp 107-29, at p. 122.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, pp 122-3; Aan De Wiel, ‘L’Église catholique irlandaise pendant la première guerre mondiale’, p. 82.

British regular forces, the need for an exclusively Catholic Irish Brigade receded. It may even be argued that by creating an exclusively Catholic corps, the British military reinforced the idea that Catholics regiments must be segregated from Protestant regiments. While there were certainly some religiously exclusive formations on the Irish Establishment (such as Orange Order lodges that formed yeomanry corps), the British army as a whole preferred integration, in order to promote effectiveness and lessen the possibility of sectarian tensions. The establishment of the Irish Brigade in the British service was an important gesture of goodwill towards Irish Catholics but it was ultimately a hollow one; as the British government chose to side with the Ascendancy it was the men of the Irish Brigade who paid the price in the tropical heat of the West Indies. The experiences of these men demonstrate how the Catholic Irish military tradition, traditionally associated with France and the Jacobite cause, now had the chance of finding a home in the British service. An exclusively Catholic brigade had not worked but other formations offered the potential to unite the varying Irish identities, rather than separate them. These formations will now be examined.

CHAPTER 4

‘ZEAL AND PATRIOTISM’: THE IRISH MILITIA, 1793-1802

The Irish militia was formed in 1793 both to defend Ireland from French invasion and free up the regular regiments for overseas service, and represented almost two thirds of the Irish military garrison from 1793 to 1802.¹ The rank and file composed many Catholics; yet unlike the Irish Brigade, this formation served exclusively in Ireland. As most of the senior officers were members of the Ascendancy, there was less of a perceived threat to Protestant values associated with this formation. Indeed, Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh and Chief Secretary for Ireland, praised the Irish militia in 1800 for their ‘zeal and patriotism’.² In these early days of official Catholic service in the British military, the militia are significant as they represent a coming together of Protestant military tradition, as espoused by the officers, and the Irish Catholic majority who made up the majority of the rank-and-file. Yet, the Irish militia in general has only been the subject of two studies.³ Therefore, this chapter explores how successfully or unsuccessfully competing Irish identities came together in the militia, and examines the social and political factors that influenced the experiences of militiamen.

It was noted in the introduction that through Ascendancy officers, the Protestant defence tradition could significantly influence the experiences of Irish Catholic soldiers, and the militia regiments are a prime example of this. The Ascendancy would seem to have had great confidence in their military capabilities and the stabilising effect of a Protestant presence in a unit, as evidenced by their refusal to allow the Catholic Irish Brigade to serve

¹ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 16.

² Castlereagh to Viscount Clements, 22 Jan. 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/135).

³ Nelson, *The Irish militia*; McAnally, *The Irish militia*.

at home, contrasted with their enthusiasm for leading militia regiments composed of both creeds. The extent to which this confidence was warranted, and the government perception of these Ascendancy officers, will be explored in this chapter.

Although the events of 1798 are important in the history of the Irish militia, the success or failure of any formation has much to do with its leadership and organization off the battlefield. 38 militia regiments were formed in Ireland at the beginning of the wars and documentation of their day-to-day activities is variable, therefore the establishment, early years and post-rebellion activities of a case study regiment, the Donegal Militia, is examined in detail to understand the social, political and military factors, both locally and internationally, that could shape a regiment. The Donegal Militia was one of the larger militia regiments, with an eventful service history that included numerous actions against rebels in 1798, and as such provides good examples of how the militia operated in both a day-to-day capacity and also during times of conflict. It has also been selected for study due to the excellent primary source material available, most notably the regimental order books (now lodged in the National Archives at Kew), and the daily order book of Lieutenant Peter Hurst when the regiment was stationed in Birr, County Offaly (now lodged in the National Library of Ireland). The only existing study of this regiment focuses on its actions in the rebellion; therefore this analysis significantly extends scholarship on this formation and provides much additional context and analysis.⁴ Particular attention will be given to the senior officers of the Donegal Militia, and how the military tradition of the Protestant Ascendancy developed in the Irish militia.

However, the rebellion of 1798 was a watershed moment for the Irish militia, in which perceptions of the militiamen and their commanders were tested. Different regiments would respond in different ways to adversity, and the varying quality of leadership would be

⁴ Kenneth Dodds, 'The Donegal Militia and the 1798 Rebellion' in *The Donegal Annual*, no. 62 (2010), pp 46-52.

a key factor. As such, 1798 is discussed in broader terms, and the varying experiences of different militia regiments are compared and contrasted.

ORIGINS OF THE IRISH MILITIA

Relevance of the Volunteer movement to the Irish militia

A militia may be described as an armed volunteer force, composed of citizens who join together to defend their country in times of emergency, bolstering the regular professional army. In Ireland during the eighteenth-century militias had been embodied and disembodied from time to time, when Britain found itself at war with one of its European neighbours. During the American War of Independence, the Irish government did not wish to finance a militia, which led to the formation of the Irish Volunteer movement. This mostly middle and upper class group of armed Protestants operated outside of government control and successfully lobbied for a number of political and trade reforms for Ireland. The British and Irish authorities feared the destabilising effect of the Volunteers and when war again threatened in the early 1790s, the Volunteers were suppressed and an official government militia was embodied in its place.⁵

Government perceptions of the Irish militia

The primary role envisaged for the militia was that of counter-invasion, as a landing by French forces was seen as distinctly possible, anywhere in the British Isles. Their secondary role was that of peace-keeping, protecting the civil magistrates and the Revenue, and assisting them in their duties. The use of a relatively untrained military force to police the civilian population would prove difficult over the coming years. The militia, initially envisioned as a Protestant force, was embodied as a mixed force, with Protestants occupying

⁵ See Introduction and Chapter 5 for more details on the Irish Volunteers.

most of the officer positions and Catholics making up the majority of the rank and file, a command structure reflective of the complex social identity of Ireland in the eighteenth-century. The establishment of the Irish militia marked an important turning point in relations between Britain and Ireland, as the security of the kingdom of Ireland was now largely in the hands of a mostly Catholic armed formation. Previous militia formations in Ireland had been exclusively Protestant.⁶ However, the Irish Militia Act, passed soon after the Catholic Relief Act of 1793 was also a source of tension as many Catholics believed that the Catholic Committee and even the clergy had bargained the Catholic Relief Act in return for supporting the Militia Act.⁷

The government, headed by the lord lieutenant, was reluctant at first to adopt a militia; they feared they would be handing over power and influence to the Irish M.P.s who would become militia commanders.⁸ One of the main figures behind the establishment of the militia was Arthur Hill, Lord Hillsborough (and later Marquis Downshire), a powerful Irish Ascendancy politician and land magnate who frequently opposed the government, in particular in relation to the Act of Union, as will be seen later in the chapter.⁹ He was exactly the kind of man that the British and Irish governments feared would use the militia to his advantage, exerting patronage through the appointment of officers to his regiment. The British army was funded by parliament but presided over by the monarch.¹⁰ Appointments and commissions were handled by the monarch and his commanders.¹¹ This had the result that the army remained largely apolitical, a very important aspect since the time of the

⁶ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 14.

⁷ Thomas Bartlett, 'An end to moral economy: the Irish militia disturbances of 1793' in *Past & Present*, no. 99 (May, 1983), pp 41-64, at pp 61-2.

⁸ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 15.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 43.

¹⁰ Reid, *Armies of the Irish rebellion*, p. 10.

¹¹ Mallinson, *The making of the British army*, p. 40.

Glorious Revolution.¹² The danger of militia commanders becoming politicised, a real possibility in Ireland, would prove to be a problem in subsequent years.

Despite the misgivings of the governments in Dublin and Westminster over granting military power to the Ascendancy, they saw an opportunity to guide these military ambitions in a manner suitable to government, rather than letting them drift into the independent and potentially destabilising practice of Volunteering. While the Ascendancy had great confidence in their abilities, the government saw the prudence in opening the militia to Catholics as well, to foster goodwill as well as harness the manpower potential they offered. The militia was established as a part-time force, with twenty-eight days service per year, the rest of the time the men would continue on with their civilian lives.¹³

However, soon after their establishment, the militia was called out for full-time service.¹⁴ The militia regiments were soon ordered to serve away from their home counties and its neighbours; this was to prevent the subversion of their authority due to close ties with the locals, but also meant that families often followed the regiment wherever they marched.¹⁵ The pay rate for full time service in the militia was reasonable when compared with wages in Ireland in the 1790s, and better than most when the wage increase to one shilling a day after 1797.¹⁶ Therefore the militia would have been a reasonable career, especially for those that would otherwise have had to live on lower civilian wages.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DONEGAL MILITIA

In the spring 1793 the county of Donegal provided one regiment of infantry to the Irish militia, out of a total of thirty eight infantry regiments formed from the various counties and

¹² Ibid., p. 41.

¹³ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 51.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 153.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 154.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 143.

county boroughs.¹⁷ As all the regiments had been established on the same date the Donegal Regiment was ranked, by random allocation of the numbers, thirty six out of the thirty eight (see Table 2).¹⁸

Militia regiments by order of precedence

1. Monaghan	16. Londonderry	31. Roscommon
2. Tyrone	17. Royal Meath	32. Cork (South)
3. Mayo (North)	18. Cavan	33. Waterford
4. Kildare	19. King's County (Offaly)	34. Cork (North)
5. Louth	20. Killkenny	35. Dublin County
6. Westmeath	21. Limerick County	36. (Prince of Wales') Donegal
7. Antrim	22. Sligo	37. Wicklow
8. Armagh	23. Carlow	38. Wexford
9. Royal Down	24. Drogheda	
10. Leitrim	25. Queen's County (Laois)	
11. Galway	26. Clare	
12. Dublin City	27. Cork City	
13. Limerick City	28. Tipperary	
14. Kerry	29. Fermanagh	
15. Longford	30. Mayo (South)	

Table 3.1: Irish militia regiments, ranked in order of precedence

Each regiment of militia was commanded by a lieutenant-colonel commandant and appointed by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, John Fane, the Earl of Westmorland, based at Dublin Castle.¹⁹

William Burton Conyngham

The Right Honourable William Burton Conyngham, county governor of Donegal, was appointed lieutenant-colonel commandant of the Donegal regiment in April 1793.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁸ *Freeman's Journal*, 13 August 1793; McAnally, *The Irish militia*, p. 318.

¹⁹ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 91.

Conyngham's surname was initially Burton, after his father Francis Burton, but he also took his mother's maiden name, in recognition of his uncle and patron, the Earl Conyngham. Conyngham's background is typical of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland. Following an education at Cambridge and Lincoln's Inn, he decided for a career in the military, continuing the strong family tradition in military service; his grandfather, Major-General Henry Conyngham had served in Mountjoy's Regiment, as well as in the 6th Dragoons and was the first colonel of the 8th Dragoons, and was eventually killed in action during the War of the Spanish Succession, while his great-grandfather, Albert Conyngham, had fought for William III at the Boyne in 1690. Conyngham served as lieutenant colonel of the 12th Dragoons in the 1760s, where he oversaw their transformation to light cavalry, and as an Aide-de-Camp to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Earl Harcourt, in 1775. He also served on the Barrack Board, which oversaw accommodation for soldiers, and as Teller of the Exchequer.

Like most lieutenant-colonels commandant of the militia, Conyngham was a M.P. for a number of different constituencies over the course of his life. He was county governor of Donegal at the time of the establishment of the militia, and inherited estates in Donegal from his uncle, as well as the estate of Slane, County Meath, which he made his home.²¹ Conyngham was part of the 'improving' class of the Protestant Ascendancy; he was involved in the widening of the streets of Dublin and the establishment of Rutland Island in Donegal as a fishing community. He improved his Slane estate and supported the Patriot movement for Free Trade, as he was convinced Ireland could become an economic power if it harnessed its resources.²² Conyngham was also a founding member of the Royal Irish Academy, president of the Hibernian Antiquities Society and a committee member of the Royal

²⁰ Edward Cooke to W. B. Conyngham, 11 Apr. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

²¹ 'William Burton Conyngham (1733–96)', Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (7 Dec. 2011).

²² C. E. F. Trench, 'William Burton Conyngham (1733 - 1796)' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, cxv (1985), pp 40-63, at p. 41; 'William Burton Conyngham (1733–96)', *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 60 vols, 2004), xiii, 80.

Society.²³ He was mostly Conservative, and spoke against Catholic enfranchisement, but did not display animosity towards Irish Catholics.

As a prominent landowner, politician and possessing military experience, Conyngham was a sensible choice to command the Donegal Militia, particularly given the close links between the military and politics in British and Irish society in the eighteenth-century. Curiously, his entries in the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* and *Dictionary of National Biography* do not include his militia service; however, his varied, distinguished and energetic career illustrates the influential identity of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland; in the political, social, military and even academic spheres.²⁴

Selection of the officers

On his appointment, Conyngham was urged by the under-secretary Edward Cooke, on behalf of the Lord Lieutenant, to complete recruitment as soon as possible, indicating the seriousness with which the government perceived the double threat of invasion and insurrection.²⁵ As commanding officer of the regiment, Conyngham was responsible for selecting his subordinate officers and in July, Robert Hobart, Chief Secretary for Ireland, communicated to Conyngham that Westmorland had approved his list of officers and sent blank commissions for them, to be signed by Conyngham.²⁶ This meant that the militia commissions were inferior in commissions in the regulars, which were signed by the lord lieutenant or king, and indicates that the militia were perceived by government to be a lesser, more amateur formation.²⁷ The following year, General Sir George Hewett, Adjutant General to the Forces in Ireland, would reiterate this, stating that while militia and fencibles

²³ ‘William Burton Conyngham (1733–96)’, *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 60 vols, 2004), xiii, 81; Peter Harbison, *William Burton Conyngham and his Irish circle of antiquarian artists* (Yale, 2012).

²⁴ ‘William Burton Conyngham (1733–96)’, *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 9 vols, 2009), ii, 806-8; ‘William Burton Conyngham (1733–96)’, *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 60 vols, 2004), xiii, 80-1.

²⁵ Cooke to Conyngham, 6 Apr. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

²⁶ Hobart to Conyngham, 13 July 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

²⁷ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 94.

officers were to be equal, with the date of their commissions determining seniority, the regular officers of equal rank with militia officers were considered senior, no matter the commission date.²⁸

Conyngham appointed eight captains, one major and one lieutenant colonel. The Donegal regiment was relatively large, composing ten companies in 1793.²⁹ The lieutenant-colonel commandant, lieutenant colonel and major were the field officers of the regiment.³⁰ The lieutenant colonel, Richard Maxwell, and major, the Honourable N. J. Burton, commanded a company each.³¹ The remaining companies were commanded by the eight captains. Though the muster rolls of the Donegal do not indicate any direct relatives with similar surnames, apart from N. J. Burton, it can be expected that these men were linked by marriage or political links, as they were all chosen by Conyngham.³² Nepotism was common in the Irish militia, and lieutenant-colonels commandant often appointed at least one relative to be a junior officer in his regiment.³³ The later yeomanry and fencibles also experienced degrees of nepotism due to their localised nature, while Pitt's Irish Brigade also experienced nepotism due to its tradition of familial service from its time in the French army.

The Donegal Militia was ordered to be drawn out on 14 August 1793.³⁴ Correspondence from later that month indicates the authorities at Dublin Castle were keen to see cooperation between the militia and regular regiment, as the experience offered by professional soldiers could potentially improve discipline in the militia. Hewett wrote to Conyngham informing him that,

The Lord Lieutenant has particularly recommended it to the commanding officers of the different regiments of cavalry and infantry in this kingdom, to give every assistance in their power, consistent with the attention due to their own corps, to the

²⁸ Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 9 Nov. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

²⁹ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 46.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 49-50.

³¹ Muster roll for the Donegal Militia, 1 April to 30 Sept. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 13/2751).

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 92.

³⁴ Hobart to Conyngham, 14 Aug. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

regiments of Militia, by either lending non-commissioned officers, private men and drummers to assist in their drill, or receiving such men as may be sent to their quarters for instruction, compensation not less than double pay being made to the non-commissioned officers so employed by the Militia regiments.³⁵

This recommendation could also be seen as an attempt to improve relations between Dublin Castle, where the Lord Lieutenant was overall commander of the Irish militia, and the Royal Hospital at Kilmainham, where the Commander-in-Chief commanded the regular forces; the division between the two doubtlessly fostered the regulars' disdain for the militia.

Recruitment difficulties

Conyngham informed Hobart in August that he had selected Lifford, the county town of Donegal, as his regimental headquarters.³⁶ Hewett replied 'the regiment under your command should be reviewed by a General Officer on or before the 1st of October who will also report its appearance to His Majesty, by which time it is expected that the men will be completely clothed, armed and accoutred.'³⁷ He also requested a return of any men with previous military service 'specifying the corps they came from and length of service,' most likely in order to determine how many experienced men they had in the militia.³⁸

However, recruitment appears to have been difficult; Conyngham responded to Hewett on 2 September, requesting more time for the returns to be made to Kilmainham.³⁹ The returns were lists of officers and men already recruited into the regiment. Conyngham explained that 'the greater part' of his officers, including himself, were dispersed 'through a very extensive' county to attend the recruitment ballot and he requested that the Commander-in-Chief would permit more time for a return to be made.⁴⁰ In a large and sparsely populated county like Donegal, recruitment would have been particularly

³⁵ George Hewett to Conyngham, 24 Aug. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

³⁶ Conyngham to Hobart, 23 Aug. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

³⁷ Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 23 Aug. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Conyngham to the Adjutant General, 2 Sept. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

challenging for the officers. The Donegal regiment was one of the larger militia regiments; the total number required being 560 men.⁴¹

The ballot referred to was the means of recruitment used for the militia, as prescribed by the Irish Militia Act; the deputy governors and parish constables drew up lists of eligible men in each parish, between eighteen and forty-five years of age, drew names at random and these men were expected to join the regiment.⁴² The need for this form of conscription highlights the rising requirement for soldiers in response to the *levée en masse*.

This system proved very unpopular, as it was difficult to opt out unless the person found someone willing to take his place or he could pay his way out. A number of riots occurred across Ireland in response to the Militia Act during 1793, resulting in about 230 dead nationwide, although Donegal was said to have experienced only ‘minor’ disturbances.⁴³ The people feared that the militia might be sent aboard and that poorer families would be left destitute, yet if one volunteered for the regulars one was guaranteed to be rotated out of the country at some point and therefore the militia should have been a more attractive prospect.⁴⁴ The ballot system was dropped later in 1793 as it was deemed to be too inefficient and unpopular.⁴⁵ It was replaced by the ‘beat of drum’ approach, where a recruiting party marched into a town or village to the beat of their drum and encouraged the local men to enlist. This was a far more effective method of recruitment, with added political advantage of distancing British approaches from those of France; as propaganda of the period indicates, this was a distinction Britain was keen to make (Fig. 3.1).

⁴¹ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 46.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴³ Bartlett, ‘An end to moral economy’, pp 57-8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 41-64.

⁴⁵ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 67.



Figure 3.1: The Contrast 1792 by Thomas Rowlandson.

(British Museum, London)

The bounty of a guinea also acted as an incentive to men enlisting, particularly to the unemployed.⁴⁶ Nelson states that in the North Mayo Militia 194 were unemployed, 197 possessed a trade, and 54 were labourers.⁴⁷ As Donegal is a large, rural county, quite like Mayo, one can assume the recruits of the Donegal Militia had similar backgrounds. Due to Donegal's part in the Ulster linen industry, a large number of its ranks were weavers; in 1802, the number of linen weavers in the Donegal Militia was stated to be 185, a third of the regiment.⁴⁸

Regimental pride

The militia reflected Irish society, with a numerical majority of Catholics. However, Nelson points out that if one compares the ratio of Catholics to Protestants in each county militia regiment, to the ratio of Catholics to Protestants in each county in general, it may be concluded that, in proportion, more Protestants than Catholics joined the militia.⁴⁹ This indicates that many Protestants saw the militia as an opportunity to continue their tradition of self-defence. The large amount of Catholic recruits, however, meant that the militia was destined to be a formation of mixed identities; both Catholic and Protestant as well as upper,

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 51.

⁴⁷ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 123; Enrolment book, North Mayo Militia (T.N.A., W.O., 68/325).

⁴⁸ Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army', p. 58, n. 28; McAnally, *The Irish militia*, p. 57.

⁴⁹ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, pp 124-5.

middle and lower classes. As such, regimental pride was an important means of uniting the men.

The Protestant military tradition may have motivated Conyngham's application to have the Donegal regiment bestowed with the honorific 'The Prince of Wales's Own.'⁵⁰ Only a few militia regiments received these honorific titles, such as the 'Royal Meath' and the 'Royal Downshire.'⁵¹ Furthermore, the Prince of Wales (the future George IV) was an especially important figure in politics and society at this time, due to his father George III's frequent bouts of insanity. Incidentally, Conyngham had also been lieutenant-colonel of the 12th Dragoons in the 1760s, when it was renamed the 12th (Prince of Wales's) Regiment of (Light) Dragoons.⁵² Of course, Conyngham's standing with the high levels of society would also have been improved by these successful applications, indicating that both pragmatism and regimental pride may have influenced him as commanding officer. The Conyngham family continued to have a close relationship with the Prince Regent; Conyngham's nephew, William Conyngham, was a member of the royal household and successfully petitioned the Prince for an earldom and it was said that Lady Conyngham was also very close to the Prince.⁵³

The regimental band was another important expression of unit pride, and particularly important for newly-formed regiments. Expense records of the Donegal militia show that in July 1793, two boys were learning the drum in Drogheda under the drum-major of the 12th Regiment, as the Donegal was lacking a drum major of its own.⁵⁴ The quarter-master, Sergeant James Goddard, wondered if Conyngham might be able to obtain one from the 12th Regiment of Foot, via a Major Burt.⁵⁵ Lieutenant-Colonel Walter Jones of the Leitrim Militia

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 54.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 54.

⁵² Christopher Chant, *The handbook of British regiments* (London, 1988), p. 36.

⁵³ C. Peter Kaellgren, 'Lady Conyngham's silver gilt in the Royal Ontario Museum' in *The Burlington Magazine*, cxxxiv, no. 1071 (1992), pp 368-374, at p. 369.

⁵⁴ Maxwell to the Barrack Board, 10 Oct. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁵⁵ Goddard to Maxwell, 24 Sept. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

later informed Conyngham that this position had been filled by a McBride, formerly of the Leitrim; however, Colonel Henry John Clements of the Leitrim expected two guineas and a crown ‘the price of a man that must be got in his place.’⁵⁶ Evidently the drum major was an important figure in the regiments, and both commanding officers were keen to have one. The cooperation of the regular regiments in training drummers and fifers for the militia indicates the regimental bands were a uniting force throughout the British service. Weapons and equipment were of Irish manufacture; yet rapid militarisation led to shortages of both, and additional material was imported from Britain.⁵⁷

In September a Miss King of Celbridge was appointed to make the standards or ‘Colours’ of the regiment. These were to be prepared ‘agreeable to the King’s Regulation’ and ‘on the Regimental Standard, the Prince of Wales’ Crest’ was to be embroidered.⁵⁸ The important symbolism of the crest linked the men of the regiment to their patron and future king. These colours, presented in a ‘partly religious, partly secular’ ceremony, held great importance to the regiment, acting as rallying points during battle and inspiring pride and loyalty to their sovereign monarch as well as to their own regiment.⁵⁹ In the Donegal Militia, careful consideration was clearly being taken in the meticulous preparation of the colours, with the officers requiring a drawing before giving their final approval.⁶⁰

Goddard reported to Maxwell that the drums were painted black with plumes of feathers on them, as per the badge of the Prince of Wales.⁶¹ The three ostrich feathers of the Prince of Wales’s heraldic badge was a common image used by the Donegal Militia, such as on an officer’s silver gorget.⁶² Again, there were pragmatic, as well as personal reasons for such pageantry; there would have been a level of competition amongst different militia

⁵⁶ Lt. Col Jones to Conyngham, 10 Oct. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁵⁷ John King to the Commissioners of Transport, 20 April 1795 (N.L.I., K.P., MS 1003/57).

⁵⁸ Letter to [Conyngham], 3 Sept. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁵⁹ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 72.

⁶⁰ Goddard to Maxwell, 24 Sept. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Stephen Woods, ‘The gorgets of the ‘Gorgeous Infantry’’ in *Irish Arts Review*, iii, no. 4 (1986), pp 49-52, at p. 50.

commanders, and having the Prince of Wales' crest on his regimental colours undoubtedly increased the prestige of Conyngham's regiment.

While Conyngham evidently encouraged regimental pride, likely for both patriotic and practical reasons, he was not extravagant. A Dublin tailor, William Ramford of Chambers St, Dublin, wrote to Conyngham on 9 October, regarding the clothing of the regiment.⁶³ He assured Conyngham that he would 'be charged only what Army pays' and would 'get much better cloth.'⁶⁴ Conyngham clearly took an interest in the presentation of his regiment, an important expression of his family's, and the Ascendancy's, military tradition, but he also made sure he did not pay excessively for it.

EARLY YEARS OF ACTIVE SERVICE

Absent officers and desertion

In October 1793 the regiment was ordered to march to their first posting in Derry city.⁶⁵ As the militia remained in Ireland, it could be difficult to keep officers with their regiments and away from the distractions of society. Furthermore, not all officers followed the correct procedures for absenting themselves, prompting Hewett to order that officers absent without leave be arrested on re-joining their regiment, and 'their cases reported specially to the commander in chief.'⁶⁶ This would be applied to Lieutenant Jones of the Donegal regiment, who was ordered to attend a court-martial the following February due to being absent without leave.⁶⁷ The problem of absent officers is illustrative of the amateur nature of the militia, and the firm approach of Hewett indicates the importance of discipline to the military

⁶³ Ransford to Conyngham, 9 Oct. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Cooke to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 26 Oct. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221, Marching Orders, 1).

⁶⁶ Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 19 Nov. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁶⁷ Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 3 Feb. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

authorities, to foster unity amongst the newly formed militia regiments. Sylvester Douglas, the new Chief Secretary for Ireland, informed Conyngham in February 1794, of the Lord Lieutenant's wishes that Conyngham take the 'necessary measures for completing as soon as possible the Donegal Regiment of militia.'⁶⁸ This indicates that recruitment continued to be a difficulty for the Donegal regiment. Absentee officers was also a problem in the regular British army at this time, with senior officers purchasing commissions in regiments in order to enjoy the prestige of military life, transferring to a regiment coming home when their original regiment received orders for overseas service.⁶⁹

Desertion amongst the rank and file of the Irish militia was also a serious problem. As the militia served throughout Ireland, it was easier for those who did not take to army life to desert and make their way home, unlike the Irish Brigade, whose confinement in port prevented large-scale desertion, or regular regiments deployed overseas. 'Bounty jumping' was another motive for desertion, where a recruit joined a regiment, received the enlistment bounty, then deserted and joined another regiment to receive another enlistment bounty.⁷⁰ The bounty money was a substantial sum but the risk of harsh punishment was also high.

Hewett stated in a general order in November:

The spirit of desertion having greatly increased it is earnestly requested of the officers of militia to do their utmost in trying to apprehend deserters wherever they can be found and to explain to all under their command, that whoever apprehends a deserter is not only entitled by Act of Parliament to 20 shillings, but also to such rewards as may have been offered from time to time by the regiments they deserted from. As there are now but few counties without militia, it is hoped that with proper exertion, deserters cannot remain anywhere in security.⁷¹

Significant cash rewards were offered to anyone who apprehended a deserter, as incentives to both officers, who otherwise may not have cared about losing recruits, and men. In

⁶⁸ Douglas to Conyngham, 26 February 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁶⁹ Mallinson, *The making of the British army*, p. 137.

⁷⁰ Chart, 'Irish levies during the Great French War', pp 498-9.

⁷¹ Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 17 Nov. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

combating desertion, the militia itself also takes on an internal security role, rather than simply providing security against invasion.

Regimental pride in day-to-day militia life

By April 1794 the Donegal Militia was stationed at Birr, County Offaly, where Lieutenant-colonel Maxwell was in command, as Conyngham was often absent, most likely due to his civilian duties. Many of the senior officers of the militia were also members of parliament, magistrates or sheriffs, and often required leave to fulfil these roles.⁷² For example, Captain Boyd, as a County Sheriff, was permitted to attend the Donegal Assizes.⁷³

Maxwell appears to have been overly concerned with the outward appearance of the regiment, issuing numerous orders throughout the summer regarding the men's clothing, equipment and general appearance. He ordered that the men on the sick list had to be 'correctly dressed' at all times, and they risked confinement if the officers saw any man with 'his hair, or any part of his dress out of order.'⁷⁴ All kit was to be kept in perfect condition, clean 'but fit for service, which should be the pride of every soldier who is anxious to discharge his duty with credit to himself, on service to his country.'⁷⁵ Even the sick were ordered 'to make cartridges' and 'to parade every morning at seven o'clock with the regiment.'⁷⁶ Officers were also to be properly dressed at all times.⁷⁷ Maxwell ordered regular inspections of arms and accoutrements, as he was constantly dismayed by the condition of both.⁷⁸ Maxwell's constant emphasis on dress, duties and regimental pride may indicate that he was a particularly fastidious officer, or conversely, that he was an inexperienced officer, who in the absence of practical experience, let the minutiae of military life guide his command.

⁷² Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 72.

⁷³ Hewett to Fawcett, 7 March 1797 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁷⁴ Donegal Militia Order Book, 7 May 1794 (N.L.I., Ms 9889).

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Donegal Militia Order Book, 28 May 1794 (N.L.I., Ms 9889).

⁷⁷ Donegal Militia Order Book, 1 June 1794 (N.L.I., Ms 9889).

⁷⁸ Donegal Militia Order Book, 11 May 1794 (N.L.I., Ms 9889).

Conyngham, having joined the regiment, also wished his regiment to be well-dressed and stated that the officers needed to be attentive to the clothing of the regiment. He hoped that they were ‘ambitious of always appearing well dressed.’⁷⁹ In order to maintain this he gave them an extra clothing of jackets, a not inconsiderable expense considering the number of men in the regiment, again demonstrating the personal investment of Conyngham in his regiment. Conyngham’s motivations are easier to discern; as a member of the Protestant Ascendancy, the appearance of his regiment would have reflected his perceived standing in society, and was also a means of expressing the Protestant, and family, tradition of military service.

The order book also documents a number of ‘feu-de-joye’ salutes, where the regiment was ordered to fire a gun salute in recognition of various successes against the French on land and at sea, illustrating the nationwide importance of military pride.⁸⁰ The continuing importance of the regimental band to the Donegal may be seen in an agreement between Maxwell and John Stephens, late Band Master of the Monaghan Militia.⁸¹ Stephens was to serve as a private musician in the Donegal Militia, but was to be mustered as a sergeant and paid one shilling and one penny per day more than the normal pay for a sergeant in recognition of his musical abilities.

Training and discipline in day-to-day militia life

The early months of active service for the Donegal Militia were also characterised by a number of discipline problems, indicative of the usual difficulties associated with change from civilian to military life. The regiment was also periodically sent on detached duty to locations such as Dublin or Loughglinn, County Roscommon.⁸² This was a common practice for the militia, in order to maintain a law and order role, but one that prevented the

⁷⁹ Donegal Militia Order Book, 15 June 1794 (N.L.I., Ms 9889).

⁸⁰ Donegal Militia Order Book, 8 May 1794, 17 June 1794 (N.L.I., Ms 9889).

⁸¹ ‘Articles of agreement made and concluded at Athlone’, 14 Sept. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁸² Donegal Militia Order Book, 7 July 1794 (N.L.I., Ms 9889); Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 16 September 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221); McAnally, *The Irish militia*, pp 88-9.

regiment from training and gaining discipline as a cohesive body. In June, Maxwell ordered 'that no filth, dirty water etc is on any account to be thrown through the barracks windows, nor is any man to make water through them, by day or night, anyone found disobeying this order will be confined.'⁸³ Also in June, Conyngham claimed expenses for the transmittance of two mutineers of the Donegal Militia from Derry to Dublin.⁸⁴ Unauthorised discharging of weapons was also an issue, with Conyngham ordering that any man found guilty of this 'unsoldierlike' behaviour was to be confined.⁸⁵ In July, Conyngham stated that he was 'mortified' at the appearance of the regiment.⁸⁶

Relations with the local population would be of great importance in the event of invasion or insurrection and so had to be properly maintained. Therefore, the men of the regiment were not permitted to leave Birr to purchase food, as arrangements had already been made with the locals under certain regulations.⁸⁷ Lieutenant Hurst recorded that 'the Officer of the Day till further orders, will be pleased to attend the potato markets, for the purpose of preserving regularity between the men of the regiment and the country people.'⁸⁸ This was clearly to avoid exploitation and confusion as had happened previously in Lifford, where the regiment had mustered, where there had been numerous disputes over fuel contracts and supply.⁸⁹ Another order from Conyngham in July stresses the importance of local relationships, stating that the men of the regiment were strictly forbidden from 'going into any private gardens or demesnes without leave from the owner.'⁹⁰ Sometimes relations with the local population broke down completely, such as when men of the Westmeath Militia killed three locals in County Down in 1795, following an argument at a public

⁸³ Donegal Militia Order Book, 2 June 1794 (N.L.I., Ms 9889).

⁸⁴ W. B. Conyngham to the Right Hon. [Francis] Conyngham, 10 June 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁸⁵ Donegal Militia Order Book, 24 June 1794 (N.L.I., Ms 9889).

⁸⁶ Donegal Militia Order Book, 12 July 1794 (N.L.I., Ms 9889).

⁸⁷ Donegal Militia Order Book, 11 May 1794 (N.L.I., Ms 9889).

⁸⁸ Donegal Militia Order Book, 20 June 1794 (N.L.I., Ms 9889).

⁸⁹ Maxwell to Richard Thwails, 29 Sept. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁹⁰ Donegal Militia Order Book, 14 July 1794 (N.L.I., Ms 9889).

house.⁹¹ The fact that the men of the Donegal were not involved in such incidents is a testament to the leadership abilities of the regiment's officers.

Despite these initial difficulties, Conyngham praised his men for their 'constant good behaviour and attention to discipline' and hoped they were 'ambitious of the reputation of good soldiers,' as an inspection was soon to take place by Major-General Charles Crosbie, designed to test their discipline in the field and assess their readiness in case of invasion.⁹² The inspection was a success, indicating that after a year of serving together, the regiment was beginning to operate as a cohesive unit and Conyngham and Maxwell were proving to be able officers. Crosbie assured Conyngham that the 'appearance of the Donegal Militia...far exceeded anything he would have expected to find in a regiment that has so lately received their arms' and he praised 'their steadiness under arms, by which the discipline of a regiment is so strongly marked.'⁹³ Conyngham himself was praised in the *Freeman's Journal*; 'Colonel Conyngham's attention to this corps has formed them into a well disciplined and efficient body of men.'⁹⁴ Following the review, Conyngham was granted a leave of absence for three months to go to England for 'the benefit of his health', which serves as a reminder that Conyngham, although a highly able and experienced officer, was over 60 years of age at this point in the unit's history.⁹⁵

In September the regiment moved to Athlone and were put under the command of Major General Charles Crosbie, commander of the forces in Connaught.⁹⁶ There, the Deputy Quartermaster General, Charles Handfield, directed that, in the absence of barracks, 'it is recommended that houses should be hired for quartering the remainder in preference to billeting the men on the inhabitants provided it is done for government allowance of lodging

⁹¹ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 139.

⁹² Donegal Militia Order Book, 8 Aug. 1794 (N.L.I., Ms 9889).

⁹³ Donegal Militia Order Book, 11 Aug. 1794 (N.L.I., Ms 9889).

⁹⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 28 Aug. 1794.

⁹⁵ Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 29 Aug. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁹⁶ Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 13 Sept. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

money.⁹⁷ Billeting with the locals was not ideal as it meant that the men were away from the attention of senior officers, which was problematic for unit discipline and training.

While in Athlone a detachment of the regiment was sent to Lough Glinn in Roscommon ‘to relieve part of the Armagh Regiment quartered there.’⁹⁸ The following June, complaints were filed following their stay at Lough Glinn House and the regiment was ordered to pay for damages.⁹⁹ However, Maxwell refuted the allegations, as he had been informed by a Captain Varney that ‘no person could be found either to deliver up the barracks on the troops going there or to receive it from them on their quitting it, which appears exceedingly irregular, and makes the demand not as correct as it should be.’¹⁰⁰

Although the unit had overcome early discipline problems and passed its review, recruitment remained an issue; by November 1794, the Donegal Militia was still incomplete, and Conyngham was urged to ‘use every exertion’ to complete the regiment by 1 February the following year.¹⁰¹ By February of the following year Major Nesbitt stated that the regiment’s strength was 512 men, within forty eight of the establishment and Nesbitt expected the regiment would be completed soon.¹⁰² However, in the same month, Maxwell reported that only 400 stands of arms for the 508 men had arrived.¹⁰³ Supply of arms was a constant problem for all regiments on the Irish Establishment, as seen with the Irish Brigade previously, as the demands of the rising warfare in Europe put pre-industrial Britain and Ireland under great pressure.

⁹⁷ Handfield to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 22 Oct. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁹⁸ Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 16 Sept. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁹⁹ John Stephens to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 2 June 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁰⁰ Maxwell to Stephens, 7 June 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁰¹ Letter to Conyngham, 25 Nov. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁰² Letter of Major James Nesbitt, 4 Feb. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁰³ Memorial of Maxwell to Earl Fitzwilliam, 22 Feb. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

The militia in a policing role

As Ireland lacked a national police force, peace-keeping responsibilities fell to the army and militia. The preceding year a detachment of one company of the Donegal Militia had been sent to Castlereagh, County Down, and another to Roscommon town, County Roscommon, to assist the magistrates there,¹⁰⁴ while in April 1795 the regiment contributed men to a force sent to Ballymahon, County Longford, to assist the magistrates. Hewett warned that ‘considerable opposition’ was expected, which required the assistance of a ‘considerable military force.’¹⁰⁵ Detachments were sent to Lanesborough and Edgeworthstown in County Longford, another to Athleague, County Roscommon, and two to Rathowen and Mullingar, both in County Westmeath.¹⁰⁶ Some detachments were even sent back to Castlefinn and Lifford in County Donegal to assist the magistrates there.¹⁰⁷ The regiment was also charged with escorting convicts to Dublin, again in their role of maintaining law and order.¹⁰⁸ Yet the militia was also reminded of their role as a counter-invasion force; in May 1795 Hewett ordered the regiment to prepare to take to the field at the shortest possible notice.¹⁰⁹

In July the Donegal regiment moved to Drogheda, County Louth.¹¹⁰ The growing state of unrest in Ireland is evident in a letter from Major General Peter Craig to Conyngham in September, informing him that the counties of Cavan and Meath had been divided into two districts, due to their disturbed state.¹¹¹ Detachments were based in Slane, Trim, Athboy, Rathoath, Dunshaughlin and Navan in County Meath, Ardee, Collon and Termonfeckin in

¹⁰⁴ Cooke to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 23 Aug. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221, Marching Orders, 5-6).

¹⁰⁵ Hewett to Officer commanding Athlone, 7 Apr. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁰⁶ Pelham to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 6 May, 6 and 20 June 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221, Marching Orders, 9, 14 and 15).

¹⁰⁷ Pelham to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 17 Apr. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221, Marching Orders, 11).

¹⁰⁸ Cradock to Officer commanding Drogheda, 7 July 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁰⁹ Hewett to Officers Commanding Donegal Militia, 12 May 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹¹⁰ Hewett to Officer commanding, Donegal Militia, Drogheda, 9 July 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹¹¹ Maj. Gen. Craig to Conyngham, 22 Sept. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

County Louth, Drumcondra, County Dublin and Carrickmacross, County Monaghan.¹¹²

Conyngham and the regiment continued to be involved in local law and order; in August, they detained and questioned a prisoner sent by a Longford magistrate, charged with assaulting a tenant of that same magistrate.¹¹³ In September the detachment based in Slane, County Meath, was ordered by Henry King, colonel of the Sligo Militia based in Trim, County Meath, to provide assistance to the Civil Magistrates ‘whenever called upon.’¹¹⁴ However, the men were not to go on protection duty, unless ordered by government, General Craig or King himself. Evidently, the military did not want the militia to be commandeered by local authorities to guard properties or persons. Later that year, Conyngham would express his displeasure over the use of his regiment for the escort of prisoners without adequate supports, with problems ranging from the absence of handcuffs to the lack of a specified, and secure, route to march.¹¹⁵

As the regiment was stationed close to Conyngham’s home in Slane Castle, County Meath, Conyngham was able to stage ‘splendid entertainment’ on the occasion of the Prince of Wales’ birthday in August.¹¹⁶ This not only helped reinforce regimental pride and morale but also reinforced the regiment’s connection with their royal patron. The entire regiment, officers and privates, took part in the celebration, as well as a number of ‘persons of respectability.’¹¹⁷ The social dimension of the militia may also be seen in the Donegal officers’ attendance at a ball held by the mayor of Drogheda the following month.¹¹⁸

Recruitment continued to be a problem and in August, Thomas Pelham, the new Chief Secretary for Ireland, wrote to Conyngham urging him to complete his regiment as

¹¹² Pelham to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 25 June, 30 July and 19 Aug. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221, Marching Orders, 18, 20, 21 and 27); Cooke to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 21 and 22 Oct. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221, Marching Orders); Maj. Gen. Craig to Conyngham, 22 September 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹¹³ Conyngham to the Commander-in-Chief, 25 Aug. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹¹⁴ King to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, Slane, 6 Sept. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹¹⁵ Letter of Conyngham, 31 Dec. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹¹⁶ *Freeman’s Journal*, 18 Aug. 1795.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Freeman’s Journal*, 3 Sept. 1795.

soon as possible, using ‘every exertion.’¹¹⁹ Discipline problems also appear periodically; an enquiry was to be made into the alleged ‘very shameful and unmilitary conduct’ of a detachment at Lusk, County Dublin.¹²⁰ The exact nature of the offences is not specified, but the tone of this communication indicates the authorities’ zero tolerance approach to improper conduct. It is also notable that major discipline problems seem to occur while parties are on detachment, which may suggest that Conyngham and Maxwell were more capable officers than the more junior officers and NCOs sent on detachment duty. In December Lieutenant Edward Denniston was summoned to a General Court-Martial for being absent without leave; however, Conyngham himself spoke for Denniston and subsequently, Denniston was released the following January.¹²¹ Of course, such problems were not limited to the Donegal; in fact, the senior officers of the regiment were often requested to serve on the jury or act as president of courts martial for other regiments.¹²²

By the end of 1795 Ireland had destabilised to the point that all officers, excepting M.P.s, were recalled to join their regiments at quarters, and no further leave was to be granted, without prior approval by the Lord Lieutenant and only on the ‘most urgent’ occasions.¹²³ Given this precarious situation, it would have been especially important to maintain relationships between the militia and the civilian population at this time. As such, it is likely that Conyngham would have been particularly displeased with complaints filed in February 1796 regarding ‘the conduct of Mr Jones, an officer of the Donegal Militia, his servant and a private of the same regiment at the Man of War Inn,’¹²⁴ in Balbriggan, where a detachment was based.¹²⁵ It is likely the men were involved in drunken brawling, a common

¹¹⁹ Pelham to Conyngham, 13 Aug. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹²⁰ Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 20 Nov. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹²¹ Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 1 Dec. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221); Hewett to Conyngham, or Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 26 Jan. 1796 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹²² Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 20 Nov. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹²³ Hewett, to Officer commanding, Donegal Militia, 3 Dec. 1795, Circular, 18 Jan. 1796 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹²⁴ Handfield to Conyngham, 9 Feb. 1796 (N.L.I., K.P., 1080/9).

¹²⁵ Cooke to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 21 Oct. 1795 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221, Marching Orders).

crime during the period but particularly undesirable at a time when Ireland's internal stability and security was delicately poised. The regiment was of course not completely immune to dissent; in March a man was found guilty of administering the Defender's Oath to a drummer in the Donegal Militia,¹²⁶ but overall the regiment resisted large-scale disaffection.

The militia as a counter-invasion force

In April 1796 eight companies of the regiment were ordered to camp at Loughlinstown, County Wicklow and two companies to Athlone, County Westmeath.¹²⁷ The following month, Conyngham died aged sixty-three. Nathaniel Clements, Viscount Clements and a prominent landowner in Donegal, was chosen as his successor. Clements was a Whig M.P. for Carrick and Leitrim in the late 1790s.¹²⁸ Described as a Liberal, 'distinctly in advance of his time,' he was generally a supporter of government but lost political favour in later life.¹²⁹ He was selected 'due to his weight and property in the county,' yet he indicated that the government should not take his acceptance as an indication of his unquestioned support for them.¹³⁰ Clements was son of Robert Clements of Killadoon, County Kildare, later 1st Earl of Limerick, who had risen to the nobility in 1783 having made a sizeable fortune as Controller of the Great and Small Customs, Port of Dublin and Commissioner of the Revenue.¹³¹ Nathaniel's grandfather, also named Nathaniel, had been Deputy Vice-Treasurer and Teller of the Exchequer and one of the most influential men in mid-eighteenth-century Ireland, in terms of finance and politics.¹³² Clements was also related to Conyngham by marriage; Conyngham's elder brother had married Clements' aunt.¹³³

¹²⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 15 Mar. 1796.

¹²⁷ Maxwell to Quartermaster-General, 3 Apr. 1796 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹²⁸ Nathaniel Clements, 2nd Earl of Leitrim (1768-1854), *The complete peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom* (London, 13 vols, 1929), vii, 580.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 581.

¹³⁰ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 91.

¹³¹ Robert Clements, 1st Earl of Leitrim (1732-1804), *The complete peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom* (London, 13 vols, 1929), vii, 579-80.

¹³² Robert Clements, 1st Earl of Leitrim (1732-1804), *The complete peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom* (London, 13 vols, 1929), vii, 579-80; A.P.W.

Throughout 1796, the regiment returned to training for its primary role, as a counter-invasion force. As most of the regiment was assembled at Loughlinstown Camp, they could now train as a cohesive unit. While the problem of recruitment seems to have lessened, occasionally recruits had to be discharged from the regiment as they were found to be unfit for duty.¹³⁴

The perception of the authorities towards the militia varied. In July 1796 Cooke sent to Pelham an intelligence report that indicated that the militia was ‘ripe for revolt.’¹³⁵ However, in August the lord lieutenant, Earl Camden, wrote to the Home Secretary, the Duke of Portland, on the deteriorating state of affairs in Ireland, reporting on the growing disaffection amongst the common people and warned that both an insurrection and invasion were likely to occur at some point.¹³⁶ Camden urged that the Establishment needed to be augmented rapidly, preferably with cavalry levies from Britain, due to the highly dispersed nature of the army and militia across Ireland.¹³⁷ Camden reminded Portland that the militia represented the majority of the Establishment, and described it as ‘certainly as fine, and for the most part as well-disciplined troops for the field as can be produced in any country.’¹³⁸ He suspected that some privates of the militia had been sworn to the United Irishmen, but he did not imagine that the number successfully sworn was very high.¹³⁹ This indicates that despite the initial misgivings of the authorities, the militia was now being regarded as a more dependable formation as a whole, despite the attempts of the United Irishmen to infiltrate and subvert them.

Malcolmson, *Nathaniel Clements: Government and the governing elite in Ireland, 1725-75* (Dublin, 2005).

¹³³ John Debrett, *Debrett's peerage of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (2 vols, London, 1828), ii, 638.

¹³⁴ Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 29 Oct. 1796 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹³⁵ Cooke to Pelham, 20 July 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/136).

¹³⁶ Camden to Portland, 6 Aug. 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/159-60).

¹³⁷ Camden to Portland, 6 Aug. 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/160a).

¹³⁸ Camden to Portland, 6 Aug. 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/159).

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

As 1796 drew to a close, the military authorities began to increase their readiness for the ‘expected’ enemy invasion.¹⁴⁰ The formation of the Irish yeomanry in the autumn as a local security force was expected to allow the militia regiments to be ‘more collected’ without the need for as many detachments.¹⁴¹ In order to increase their response time, the men were to march with as little baggage as possible; those unfit for service, along with women and children, were not permitted to join them.¹⁴² The militia, as the largest formation in Ireland, was a vital component in the defence of Ireland. In late December 1796, the invasion attempt eventually happened, but was beaten off by severe weather. Nevertheless, early in 1797, the Lord Lieutenant thanked the generals, officers and soldiers for their speedy marches to face the enemy.¹⁴³ The Donegal Militia was ordered to march from Loughlinstown to Cork but was ordered back shortly afterwards.¹⁴⁴ In February 1797, the regiment was ordered to move south to the New Geneva Barracks, County Waterford, previously home to the Irish Brigade.¹⁴⁵ While at New Geneva detachments were again sent out to Kilkenny town, Annestown and Bunmahon, County Waterford and Burrow, County Wexford.¹⁴⁶ As part of a nationwide strategy to bring together the light companies of each militia regiment into an effective counter-insurgency force, the light company of the regiment was sent to join a light battalion at Fermoy, County Cork.¹⁴⁷ Following the invasion scare, the defence of the southern coast was of vital importance as the threat of invasion remained throughout 1797; the Dutch fleet of the Batavian Republic, the puppet-state installed by France, was waiting in harbour with an invasion army destined for Britain or

¹⁴⁰ Hewett to Crosbie, 12 Nov. 1796 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Hewett to Crosbie, 12 Nov. 1796 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁴³ Hewett to Crosbie, 24 Jan. 1797 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁴⁴ Pelham to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 25 Dec. 1796, Elliot to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 17 Jan. 1797 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221, Marching Orders).

¹⁴⁵ Cradock to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 24 Feb. 1797 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁴⁶ Elliot to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, August, 22 Oct. and 6 Nov. 1797 and 13 Mar. 1798 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221, Marching Orders).

¹⁴⁷ Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 20 Jan. 1798 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

Ireland.¹⁴⁸ While this expedition did not take place, the threat of it forced the British to continually increase their defensive capabilities.

During 1797, many of the men were approaching the end of their original, four-year enlistment term. However, a reenlistment bounty of up to three guineas was approved in order to encourage the men to remain, on condition that they served until two months after the end of the war.¹⁴⁹ An additional guinea was granted by act of parliament to men of the militia who reenlisted. The bounty indicates that government was keen to retain numbers in the militia, reflecting once more the vital role of the militia in securing Ireland against both internal and external threats. In the Donegal regiment, only eight men discharged themselves after their four years while 128 chose to reenlist.¹⁵⁰ It is likely that pragmatism, as well as patriotism, motivated these men. In addition to the generous bounty, service in the militia precluded the men from overseas service or being press-ganged into the navy.

THE REBELLION OF 1798: HEROES AND VILLAINS

The Donegal Militia in 1798

In late 1797 Sir Ralph Abercromby was appointed Commander-in-Chief and immediately set about inspecting the Irish Establishment, which he found to be in an entirely unacceptable state. In February 1798, Abercromby issued an order which criticised the entire armed forces, and reaffirmed that the military's main function should be countering invasion rather than acting in a law and order capacity.¹⁵¹ In particular, Abercromby believed that the militia lacked the discipline to be an effective peace-keeping force.¹⁵² The Ascendancy officers

¹⁴⁸ Sam Willis, *In the hour of victory: the Royal Navy at war in the age of Nelson* (2013), p. 121.

¹⁴⁹ William Elliot to Clements, 9 Feb. 1797 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁵⁰ Thomas Burgh to Messrs Ormsbey and Lecky, 3 July 1797 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221ff).

¹⁵¹ Copy of a letter from Sir Ralph Abercromby to the Duke of York, Dublin 17 Feb. 1798 (NLI, Melville Ms 54A/12).

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

were outraged at this perceived insult, and Abercromby was forced to resign.¹⁵³ The incident illustrates the pride that Irish Ascendancy officers took in their military tradition, and also suggests that high-ranking British officers did not share the Ascendancy's confidence in their military abilities.

Open rebellion broke out throughout Ireland in May, and the Donegal Militia found themselves right at the heart of the conflict, in South-East Leinster. On 28 May a force of Cork and Donegal Militia engaged rebels at the Battle of Three Rocks, but were forced to retreat. The government forces at Wexford were commanded by Maxwell, who at first was unwilling to abandon the town. However, when he found out how small his garrison had become due to two yeomanry corps quitting their posts and the Cork Militia refusing to obey their officers, and when a relief force turned back prematurely on hearing of the defeat at Three Rocks, he ordered a withdrawal to Duncannon on 30 May, enabling the rebels to take Wexford.¹⁵⁴

On June the rebels attacked New Ross where Captain Sinclair of the Donegal regiment was wounded.¹⁵⁵ This was an important battle of the rebellion, as the staunch defence by the government forces, mostly militia, cost the rebels dearly in terms of men and equipment. A Major General Johnson wrote to Lieutenant General Lake in which he mentioned a number of officers that he was 'highly indebted' to for their 'extraordinary exertions' during the battle, including Maxwell.¹⁵⁶ Evidently, the militia was comporting itself with great ability, considering they were an amateur formation. Sergeant Hamilton of the Donegal Militia was credited with being instrumental in the defeat of the rebels at New Ross.¹⁵⁷ Conversely, three Donegal militia officers were later dismissed from service 'for

¹⁵³ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, pp 176-9.

¹⁵⁴ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 190; *Annual register for the year 1798* (London, 1799), p. 186; Dodds, 'The Donegal Militia and the 1798 Rebellion', pp 48-9.

¹⁵⁵ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 73.

¹⁵⁶ *London Gazette* 9 June 1798.

¹⁵⁷ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, pp 147-8.

improper behaviour before the enemy at New Ross',¹⁵⁸ demonstrating how differently individual men could behave under the extreme conditions of battle.

On 13 June a group of twenty-nine Donegal militiamen held out against a rebel attack on the house of a local gentleman in Borris, County Carlow; the *London Gazette* reported how they 'defended themselves in the most gallant manner and killed several of the rebels' and praised 'the determined bravery of those few men.'¹⁵⁹ Such praises would have boosted unit morale and importantly, encouraged loyalty in the general population.

A less positive account was made of Lieutenant Young of the Donegal Militia, who spent several hours hanging four prisoners at Clonnegal, County Carlow, instead of relieving the troops under attack at Bunclody.¹⁶⁰ Upon their eventual arrival at Bunclody, after the rebels had departed, Young was said to have turned people out of their houses, demanding a feather bed for all his men. However, Young's heavy-handedness is the only recorded example of any major misbehaviour by the Donegal Militia and it is a sign of the discipline and propriety of the Donegal that his fellow officers objected to his behaviour.

The rebels were eventually defeated in Leinster and not long afterwards Humbert's French force landed in Connaught. While some regiments were singled out for criticism, such as the Longford and Kilkenny Militia that both broke during the French landings, recognition was also given to the men who died fighting the rebels.¹⁶¹ The 'nobility, clergy and gentry' formed a fund for the families of deceased soldiers.¹⁶² In October the regiment received a letter, informing them of a resolution of the House of Common 'that the thanks of this House be given to the army, militia and yeomanry for their meritorious exertions in the

¹⁵⁸ Taylor to Clements, 5 Nov. 1798 (N.L.I., K.P., 1082/269).

¹⁵⁹ *London Gazette*, 18 June 1798.

¹⁶⁰ Rev. James Gordon, *History of the rebellion in Ireland, in the year 1798* (2nd ed., Dublin, 1803), p. 131.

¹⁶¹ McAnally, 'The government forces engaged at Castlebar in 1798', pp 323-31.

¹⁶² General Order, Adjutant General's Office, 9 July 1798 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

present important crisis.¹⁶³ Compensation was also sought by Captain Charleton of the regiment for material losses incurred ‘when acting against the rebels in the county of Wexford.’¹⁶⁴ Further compensation was sought by Lieutenant Crawford of the regiment, for loss of baggage ‘destroyed by the rebels at Borris in the county of Carlow.’¹⁶⁵

Other militia regiments in 1798

Whereas the Donegal militiamen benefitted from the even-handed leadership of Maxwell and Clements, and correspondingly acquitted themselves very well in 1798, the same cannot be said for all regiments. A sharp contrast in leadership styles is offered by the Royal Cork City Militia detachment, stationed in Kildare under the command of a Captain Swayne; their experiences indicate the potential problems of internal security being in the hands of an amateur military force.

Whilst maintaining a law and order role the militia also needed to act with a certain amount of restraint to avoid provoking the local population. However, Swayne did not hold the local population in high regard, claiming ‘I don’t believe there is such a set of people under the canopy of heaven as in the county Kildare.’¹⁶⁶ Swayne developed a reputation for brutality, often pitch-capping suspected rebels in the locality. The sketch of Swayne pitch-capping a suspect (Fig. 3.2) is a well-known image of the 1798 rebellion, yet is it likely that most people do not realise that the officer is an Irishman from Cork, rather than an English officer. In 1798 he even threatened to pour molten lead down the throat of the local Catholic parish priest, unless he convinced the local rebels to surrender.¹⁶⁷ Swayne was killed by the rebels in the opening attacks on Prosperous during the rebellion and his body was burned in a barrel of tar.¹⁶⁸ These incidents illustrate the brutal violence that could erupt when the local

¹⁶³ Letter of D. Colquhoun, 13 Oct. 1798 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁶⁴ Taylor to Charleton, 5 Oct. 1798 (N.L.I., K.P., 1082/143).

¹⁶⁵ Taylor to Crawford, 24 Dec. 1798 (N.L.I., K.P., 1083/95).

¹⁶⁶ Earl Carhampton to Pelham, 30 Oct. 1797 (NLI, K.P., 1014/33-4).

¹⁶⁷ Pakenham, *The year of liberty*, p. 130.

¹⁶⁸ *Freeman’s Journal*, May 26, 1798.

population was persecuted by overzealous and aggressive officers. In an attempt to improve relations with the civilian population, a General Order in July prohibited corporal punishment as a means of extracting confessions, and any officers found guilty of this were to be arrested and sent to Dublin.¹⁶⁹



Figure 3.2: Capt. Swayne pitch-capping the people of Prosperous, County Kildare, 1798, attributed to Henry Brocas, 1810

(National Library of Ireland)

When the French invasion forced landed in Connaught, the initial force sent to oppose them were defeated at the Battle of Castlebar and forced to retreat.¹⁷⁰ The two largest units on the government side during the battle were the Kilkenny and Longford Militia regiments, and it was said that they were the first regiments to break and run.¹⁷¹ Cooke claimed that ‘there was disaffection in the two militia regiments, and were many, if not most of them, sworn to the United Irishmen.’¹⁷² After the battle it was also claimed that many of the militia had deserted to the enemy.¹⁷³ However, the government force was a mix of troops of varying quality, regulars, fencibles, militia and yeomanry and the command and control

¹⁶⁹ General Order, Adjutant General’s Office, 6 July 1798 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁷⁰ Gordon, *History of the rebellion in Ireland*, pp 285-6.

¹⁷¹ McAnally, ‘The government forces engaged at Castlebar in 1798’, p. 323; Nelson, *The Irish militia*, pp 220-1.

¹⁷² *Correspondence of Charles, first Marquis Cornwallis*, ed. Charles Ross (3 vols, London, 2011), ii, 395.

¹⁷³ Gordon, *History of the rebellion in Ireland*, pp 287.

abilities of their commanders, Generals Hutchinson and Lake, were somewhat questionable.¹⁷⁴ It must be remembered that the French were seasoned soldiers and the government forces were not. McAnally points out that Camden wanted the two regiments to be disbanded as scapegoats for the defeat and Cornwallis was willing to use the event to display the need for English rule over Irish affairs, as a preamble for the planned Act of Union.¹⁷⁵

ACTIVE SERVICE AFTER THE REBELLION

Service at home pre-Act of Union

Following the rebellion, the Donegal Militia moved to southern County Cork, a very important strategic location under the command of Major-General Sir Charles Ross, with the regiment based in Youghal, with detachments in Tallow, Co Waterford and Castlemartyr, County Cork.¹⁷⁶ The threat of future violence remained; even when attending Sunday services the men were to be armed and a piquet left to guard the barracks.¹⁷⁷ Once more, to improve mobility, orders were given to travel without women and children.¹⁷⁸ The commanding officer was to determine the amount of subsistence families would receive. In September 1798 the Donegal Militia was ordered to occupy the forts located at the entrance to Cork Harbour.¹⁷⁹ Cork Harbour was the main anchorage on the south coast for the Royal Navy, and coastal defences were vital to deter potential landings in the south and west of Ireland. The Cork defences consisted of five forts (Westmorland, Camden, Carlisle, Cobh, and Haulbowline) and a battery at Ringabella. Part of the regiment was sent to Camden Fort,

¹⁷⁴ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, pp 222-4

¹⁷⁵ McAnally, 'The government forces engaged at Castlebar in 1798', pp 330-1.

¹⁷⁶ Colquhoun to Clements, 22 Aug. 1798 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221); Colquhoun, Assistant Adjutant General's Office, Cork, 26 Sept. 1798 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁷⁷ General Order, Adjutant General's Office, Cork, 30 July 1798 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁷⁸ General Order, Assistant Adjutant General's Office, Cork, 20 Aug. 1798 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁷⁹ Colquhoun, Assistant Adjutant General's Office, Cork, 26 Sept. 1798 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

and part to Carlisle Fort, on the opposite side of the harbour.¹⁸⁰ These forts would have been constructed during the American War of Independence and were in poor condition by the time the Donegal militia came to occupy them, causing Clements to complain twice to the Barrack Board about a perceived lack of accommodation, although his complaints were dismissed.¹⁸¹

Men of the Donegal and Wexford militia regiments were ordered to be instructed in artillery use by the Royal Artillery men attached to each fort.¹⁸² Some of the regiment were also ordered to train as light-infantry and significantly, it was explicitly specified that an ‘intelligent’ officer was to direct them.¹⁸³ These training activities, along with the specific appeal for an intelligent officer to act as trainer, illustrate that the military authorities were keen to utilize the militia in a more professional manner. A detachment was also stationed at the Ringabella artillery battery, just south of the entrance to Cork Harbour.¹⁸⁴

While at Cork, the Donegal Militia were once more used for guarding prisoners, this time on the *Princess* prison ship.¹⁸⁵ While the Donegal Militia did not encounter any major problems with the guarding of prisoner, the Meath Militia caused problems, when a number of them raided a prison in Mallow, County Cork, liberated some of their fellow militiamen who had been kept there, and made their escape.¹⁸⁶ Other detachments were sent to Killmathomas, County Waterford, and the fort at Cobh, also at Cork harbour.¹⁸⁷

The regiment was expected to maintain a presence in the local area, to prevent disaffection and disturbances. On 17 March, St. Patrick’s Day, extra patrols were ordered

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Littlehales to Clements, 31 Jan. 1799 (N.L.I., K.P., 1083/268); Uniack to Littlehales, 31 Jan. 1799 (Donegal General Orders Book, T.N.A., W.O., 68/222); Littlehales to Clements, 19 Feb. 1799 (N.L.I., K.P., 1083/343).

¹⁸² General Order, 29 Sept. 1798 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁸³ General Order, Cork, 9 Oct. 1798 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

¹⁸⁴ Littlehales to Clements, 19 Feb. 1799 (N.L.I., K.P., 1083/343).

¹⁸⁵ Colquhoun to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 7 Mar. 1799 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/14).

¹⁸⁶ *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, iii, 95.

¹⁸⁷ Castlereagh to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 13 Feb. 1799 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/7); Colquhoun to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 4 Oct. 1799 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/80-1).

around Fort Carlisle ‘to prevent any publick [sic] houses from being open after 9 o’clock’ and prevent groups of people assembling.¹⁸⁸ Clearly, security was a major issue in the wake of the rebellion, and the authorities feared St. Patrick’s Day celebrations might trigger sectarian violence. In May 1799, these security concerns are still evident, with the troops warned to be ‘particularly alert,’ and not allow anyone in unless they had very particular business in the forts.¹⁸⁹

After an entire year guarding the Cork area, the Donegal Regiment was ordered in September 1799 to march to Youghal, County Cork, while sending out a detachment to Dungarven, County Waterford.¹⁹⁰ The following month the regiment was ordered to march to Baltinglass, County Wicklow.¹⁹¹ Detachments were sent out to a number of places; It is likely that the Donegal militia was involved in harvesting the potato crop while in Baltinglass. The corn harvest had failed in 1799 and the recently appointed Lord Lieutenant and Commander-in-Chief, Viscount Cornwallis, deeming it ‘peculiarly important to preserve the potato crop from injury,’ had ordered the militia colonels to send their men to assist in the digging of potatoes in their neighbourhoods if necessary.¹⁹² Although the Donegal’s involvement in these activities is not documented, evidence suggests that in some locales, this attempt to improve relations with the civilian population backfired; the following February Cornwallis was shocked to hear that men from several militia regiments had been stealing potatoes and condemned this ‘scandalous conduct’ as ‘an evil of the most serious nature.’¹⁹³ The critical tone of Cornwallis’s communication suggests disapproval of the unprofessional actions of the amateur regiments, and stresses the vital importance of maintaining good military-civilian relations. After all, Ireland was still highly unstable; the

¹⁸⁸ Ross to Officer commanding Carlisle Fort, 17 Mar. 1799 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/18).

¹⁸⁹ Colquhoun to Officer commanding fort at Cork harbour, 5 May 1799 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/30).

¹⁹⁰ Ross to Clements, 29 Sept. 1799 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/66).

¹⁹¹ Elliot to Clements, 31 Oct. 1799 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/88).

¹⁹² Littlehales to Officer commanding Donegal Militia and Lt. Gen. Dundas, 9 Nov. 1799 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/94).

¹⁹³ Adj. Gen. G. Nugent to Brig. Gen. Grose and Lt. Col. Maxwell, 23 Feb. 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/167).

Donegal Militia were warned to be vigilant against surprise attacks.¹⁹⁴ The use of the militia in crime prevention would have helped relations with the locals. For example, men of the Donegal Militia were congratulated for shooting one robber and apprehending two more during a robbery at Rathvilly, County Carlow.¹⁹⁵

The Act of Union: The militia as a political tool

In 1800 Cornwallis and his government moved towards a political union of the parliaments of Great Britain and Ireland, to the chagrin of Irish M.P.s. As previously noted, many militia commanders were also M.P.s, so this political move impacted the militia regiments also.

Lord Downshire, commander of the Down Militia, even encouraged the men of his regiment to sign a petition opposing the union.¹⁹⁶ For this insubordination, Cornwallis ‘without hesitation’ relieved him of his command and had the verdict circulated to all regiments in Ireland, sending a clear message that the Ascendancy must remain loyal to Britain, and not allow their personal political views to interfere with their military duties.¹⁹⁷ Although Clements also opposed the union, he did not use his militia regiment for personal political manoeuvring, and so his command was not threatened.¹⁹⁸

Dundas recognised that appeasing Protestant sensibilities was essential in order to bring about the union, and the Irish militia would play a role in his strategy; allowing the militia to volunteer for the line and service outside of Ireland would ‘flatter’ the militia commanders while also providing much needed experienced troops.¹⁹⁹ Ten thousand fit and able volunteers were required,²⁰⁰ indicating not only the size of the militia at this time but also the great need for more troops for the regulars, as Napoleon continued his rise to power

¹⁹⁴ George Otway to Clements, 17 Dec. 1799 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/106-8).

¹⁹⁵ Dundas to Nesbitt, 24 Dec. 1799 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/113-4).

¹⁹⁶ Thomas Inglis to Clements, 7 Feb. 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/152).

¹⁹⁷ *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, iii, 178.

¹⁹⁸ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, pp 91-2.

¹⁹⁹ *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, iii, 79.

²⁰⁰ Circular to General Officers, 23 Jan. 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/142-8).

in Europe. The volunteers from the Donegal Militia were to be no more than 290.²⁰¹ The total number of men who actually volunteered came to 8138, with the Donegal regiment providing 207.²⁰²

Interestingly, the Secretary of State for War, Henry Dundas, stated that the men of the militia were said to be ‘excellent,’ but ‘badly officered.’²⁰³ This comment indicates a general consensus amongst the British military and political authorities that despite the strength of the Ascendancy defence tradition, the leadership displayed by the militia commanders was decidedly lacking, and consequently, alternative means of utilizing the now experienced militiamen were needed. This contrasts with the earlier praise of Camden for the militia. The transfers to the line mark the beginning of a very different era for the militia, in which Ireland’s internal security is taken out of the militia regiments’ hands and increasingly entrusted to the Irish yeomanry, a highly Protestant and loyalist formation. British and Irish military strategy at this time suggests a perception that poor leadership was endemic in the militia, a rather unfair assumption given the actions of regiments such as the Donegal, whose highly capable officers had maintained unit discipline even under the most difficult of circumstances in the still recent rebellion.

The comments of Dundas also illustrate once more the stark pragmatism of British military strategy. Within Ireland, the militia regiments had social and patriotic significance to their Ascendancy officers, as evidenced by the devotion to regimental pride. To the British military authorities, the social significance of these units was far less important than the manpower they now could provide to the wider war effort.

In January 1800 the Chief Secretary, Castlereagh, informed Clements of the decision to allow a proportion of the Irish militia to volunteer for service in the regular Line

²⁰¹ Circular to General Officers, 23 Jan. 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/147).

²⁰² Edward Wakefield, *An account of Ireland, statistical and political* (2 vols, London, 1812) ii, 833.

²⁰³ *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, iii, 79.

Regiments.²⁰⁴ Interestingly, Castlereagh uses flattery as a tactic in a manner similar to Portland's offer to the colonels of the Irish Brigade, appealing to the 'zeal and patriotism' of the Irish militia.²⁰⁵ Castlereagh had been an officer in the Londonderry Militia and therefore, unlike other government officials, had actual first-hand experience of the militia and clearly felt that it was able for this task. His letter also served as a reminder of the broader European military situation, referring to 'the glory and security of the Empire.'²⁰⁶ The men enlisting were entitled to a bounty of eight guineas, and officers who wished to accompany their men were eligible for ensigncies in the regular regiments. Replacements would be found for men who left the militia and limits were imposed on the number of officers who could volunteer, proportional to the number of rank-and-file that volunteered, signalling an intention to keep the militia functioning efficiently at home. Five officers of the Donegal Militia responded to this offer.²⁰⁷ As one officer was permitted to volunteer for every forty to sixty recruits, this tallies with 207 men recorded as volunteering for the line.²⁰⁸ This would have amounted almost one third of the regiment, and constituted a significant disruption to unit cohesion.

Service at home post-Act of Union

After the Act of Union and the transferrals to the line, the Donegal Militia continued to assist in keeping the peace in Baltinglass. They were ordered in April to take part in extensive mixed-force patrolling of the area with other militia regiments, yeomanry corps and the 22nd Dragoons.²⁰⁹ Officers were to make sure that no harm was made to the civilian population, while the local yeomanry were to provide guides for the patrols, to prevent 'nightly

²⁰⁴ Castlereagh to Clements, 22 Jan. 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/135-41).

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Nugent to Grose and Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 22 Feb. 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/169-70); Nugent to Grose, 31 Mar. 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/201-2; Nugent to Grose, 2 May 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/212-3).

²⁰⁸ Wakefield, *An account of Ireland*, ii, 833.

²⁰⁹ Letter to Officer commanding Donegal Militia Baltinglass, 6 Apr. 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/200-1).

depredations of the banditti.²¹⁰ Captain Greene of the Castledermot Yeomanry was to advise them of the most likely places to find bandits in the area, indicating the importance of cooperation between yeomanry, militia and regular regiments.²¹¹ Detachment were stationed across a wide area; at Rathvilly and Hackettstown in County Carlow, Stratford, County Wicklow, Castledermot, County Kildare, and Davidstown, County Wexford.²¹² In May 1800 the regiment moved to Dundalk and then around several locations in County Down; including Banbridge, Hillsborough, Rathfiland, Rosstrevor and Dromore, as well as Lisburn on the Down and Antrim border.²¹³ While the regiment was stationed around Ulster, the regiment's light company was operating separately from its parent regiment, as it was in Athlone in July 1800, as part of a Light Battalion.²¹⁴ Cornwallis had ordered that attention be paid to the quality of the light infantry in Ireland, which had been lacking in some cases, as their tactics were considered suitable for counter-insurgency roles.

Fresh invasion scares in Britain in the summer of 1801 prompted many Irish militia regiments to offer to serve in Britain. The newly-appointed Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, General Sir William Medows, approved of this spirit and was pleased to see the Irish militia 'volunteering to a man' to assist England and make a 'perfidious enemy repent their rashness.'²¹⁵ Medows regretted that he could not accompany them to Britain, 'as there is no army on Earth he would sooner fight at the head of than a United British one.'²¹⁶ It is important to note that Medows was speaking in very positive terms of a 'United British' army, in which Irish militia regiments were useful and trusted for important roles. However,

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Elliot to Officers Commanding Donegal Militia, 19 May 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/218-22).

²¹³ Elliot to Officers Commanding Donegal Militia, 19 May 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/218-22); Elliot to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 9 June 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/227-8); Gasper Erck to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 24 May 1801 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/311).

²¹⁴ Nugent to Brig. Gen. Drummond, Newry, 21 July 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/ 238).

²¹⁵ Lt. Col. Edward McDonnell to Lt. Gen. Gardiner, 7 Aug. 1801 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/331).

²¹⁶ Ibid.

Medows also hoped their valour ‘would soon be rivalled by their discipline,’ indicating that the militia may still have lacked certain degree of training and discipline.²¹⁷

In late August 1801 the new Chief Secretary for Ireland, Charles Abbot, wrote to Clements, informing him of the support that would be provided for families of militiamen who had volunteered for service in Britain.²¹⁸ In December Deputy Adjutant-General William Raymond reported the king’s directions that militiamen enlisted in the regulars were to receive a bounty of five guineas in money, which was three less than in the previous year, indicating the economic toll of the continuing war.²¹⁹

The Peace of Amiens and disembodiment of the Irish militia

Following the defeat of the French by British forces in Egypt in late 1801, the possibility of peace began to emerge.²²⁰ In order to facilitate the demobilisation period, arrangements were made for the distribution of 1000 looms amongst the men of the Irish militia who had been weavers prior to enlisting, so that upon disembodiment they could immediately find work and support the linen industry.²²¹ As previously discussed, widespread militarisation had resulted in the linen industry losing many skilled workers.²²² The provision of looms indicates that the Irish government was aware of this economic impact and eager to assist former soldiers of the militia in returning to their civilian life without delay. Even with peace looming, the regiment was still busy, detachments being sent to Dromore, Downpatrick and Ballynahinch, all in County Down, and Castlefinn and Stranorlar in County Donegal.²²³

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Abbot to Clements, 25 Aug. 1801 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/337-8).

²¹⁹ Raymond to Gardiner, 8 Dec. 1801 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/368).

²²⁰ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 247.

²²¹ J. Corry, Secretary of the Dublin Linen Board, to Clements, Dec. 1801 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/371).

²²² Bisset to Pelham, 2 July 1797 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1016/5); Asher to Castlereagh, July 1798 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1017/36).

²²³ Munbee to Officer commanding Donegal Militia at Dromore, 20 Dec. 1801 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/372); Lt. Col. MacDonnell to Brig. Gen. Hart, 7 Mar. (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/390).

In preparation for disembodiment, the regiment returned to its original headquarters in Lifford, County Donegal. In April 1802 the Donegal Militia were informed of a ‘definitive treaty of peace signed at Amiens’ by Britain and France.²²⁴ All regiments of militia were ordered to prepare to return to their respective counties to be disembodied.²²⁵ The Lord Lieutenant expressed his earnest wish that all officers would be present at the time of disembodiment of the regiment in Lifford, and all accounts of the regiment were to be settled as soon as possible, so that ‘the men may return to their usual occupations, with their minds perfectly satisfied.’²²⁶

In the aftermath of the wars, the militia regiments were thanked by parliament for their services in the same manner as the regular regiments, emphasising that this amateur formation had earned the respect of the military and political authorities.²²⁷ The Duke of York, as overall Commander-in-Chief of the forces, issued a general thanks to the entire military, praising their ‘good conduct, courage and zeal.’²²⁸ The House ‘highly approved’ of the services of the non-commissioned officers and men of the militias and singled them out for particular praise, echoing Dundas’ earlier views and again suggesting that despite the prevalence of the Protestant military tradition, Ascendancy officers had failed to impress in the field.²²⁹ The Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Hardwicke, personally thanked Clements and his men and praised their ‘loyal and patriotic spirit.’²³⁰

The Donegal Militia was disembodied in Lifford on Wednesday 12 May 1802 at ten o’clock.²³¹ However, the militia would remain in existence, as a part time force; a small contingent of the men and officers were to remain fully fit for service and reside near Lifford, where the arms and accoutrements of the regiment were to be put in store in the

²²⁴ Beckwith to Brig. Gen. Hart, 2 Apr. 1802 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/395).

²²⁵ Raymond to Hart, 2 Apr. 1802 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/395).

²²⁶ Littlehales to Clements, 7 Apr. 1802 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/397).

²²⁷ Letter of J. Ley, 6 Apr. 1802 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/403).

²²⁸ Circular, Raymond, 14 Apr. 1802 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/403-4).

²²⁹ Letter of J. Ley, 6 Apr. 1802 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/403).

²³⁰ Hardwicke to Clements, 5 May 1802 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/417-8).

²³¹ Wooldridge to Maxwell, 8 May 1802 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/427).

town prison.²³² Those discharged had the option of enlisting in the regular army, provided they did so within forty-eight hours of leaving the militia.²³³ The Peace of Amiens did not last long however, and by 1803 hostilities had resumed and the militia was called out once more to protect Ireland.²³⁴ The Donegal Militia would again defend Ireland before being disembodied once more in April 1816.²³⁵

THE AMATEUR MILITARY TRADITION IN BRITAIN DURING THE FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WAR

As in Ireland amateur and volunteer forces were used extensively in Britain and a brief examination of this British amateur military tradition will help contextualise the history of the Irish militia. A militia was also raised in England, and many regiments were sent to Ireland as the political and social situation destabilised. The English militia was envisaged in a different way to the Irish militia; Western describes how the English militia of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-centuries as belonging ‘to a world of bitter political and religious animosities,’ and that as the eighteenth-century progressed British society became more peaceful and less militant.²³⁶ British militia colonels argued that a citizen militia was ‘a necessary constitutional safeguard.’²³⁷ Such a concept, of the local gentry keeping a check on governmental control, was simply not applicable to Ireland, where the centralised control of Westminster, via Dublin Castle, was essential. As in Ireland Pitt and his ministers saw militia service as a way of ensuring civilian loyalty in a time of turbulent social change.²³⁸

²³² Littlehales to Clements, 13 Apr. 1802 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/407); Littlehales to Maxwell 4 May 1802 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/414-5); Littlehales to Clements, 5 May 1802 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/420-1).

²³³ Maj. Thomas Wooldridge to Maxwell, 6 May 1802 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/428).

²³⁴ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 247.

²³⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 1 Apr. 1816.

²³⁶ J. R. Western, *The English militia in the eighteenth century* (London, 1965), p. 441.

²³⁷ Cookson, *The British armed nation*, p. 67.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

Britain had a small army at the start of the wars and newly raised amateur military forces would redress this imbalance while also connecting the male population to the military and creating a militarised society that would be ready for a protracted war with France.²³⁹ The British army had been steadily reduced since the American war and for much of the French Revolutionary wars Britain's main strength was in its navy, relying on its continental allies to do much of the military fighting.²⁴⁰

The Volunteer Act of 1794 began the mass mobilisation of the British male population.²⁴¹ Volunteer corps were formed to augment the British garrison and defend against invasion. Like the militia and yeomanry in Ireland, many of the Volunteer officers were M.P.s and therefore political decisions on how the Volunteers of Britain were used was influenced by the very officers serving in the force.²⁴² Militia and fencible made up most of the British amateur garrison, with small numbers of volunteer corps, as well as supplementary militia and the Scottish militia.²⁴³ Mounted volunteers corps were termed yeomanry if they came from the countryside, and Volunteer Light Horse if they came from urban areas, while all infantry units were termed Volunteer Corps.²⁴⁴ Events in Ireland such as the failed Bantry Bay expedition, and the formation of the Armée d'Angleterre in 1798, prompted a surge in volunteering and enlistment in the yeomanry and militia in England.²⁴⁵

Like in Ireland, the amateur defence forces were commanded by local landlords and 'notables,' men who saw the opportunity to 'assert their social leadership and mark the consequence if their communities.'²⁴⁶ Yet the Volunteer movement was reduced in later years, as many politicians still remembered the destabilising effects of the Irish Volunteer

²³⁹ Kevin Linch, 'Creating the amateur soldier: the theory and training of Britain's Volunteers' in Kennedy and McCormack, *Soldiering in Britain and Ireland* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp 200-18, at pp 205-6.

²⁴⁰ Mallinson, *The making of the British army*, p. 134.

²⁴¹ Kevin Linch, 'Creating the amateur soldier', p. 200.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 204.

²⁴³ Cookson, *The British armed nation*, p. 68.

²⁴⁴ Reid, *Armies of the Irish rebellion*, p. 17.

²⁴⁵ Cookson, *The British armed nation*, pp 68-9.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

movement in the 1780s.²⁴⁷ Manpower demands affected both Britain and Ireland; the English militia was recruiting heavily since the start of the war and in 1796 a supplementary militia was established.²⁴⁸ This mirrored the establishment of the Irish yeomanry in 1796, in addition to the militia. Just like the Irish militia, there had been some opposition and riots to the formation of the English and Scottish militias, in 1796 and 1797 respectively, but this opposition was not restricted to the British and Irish military; there was also occasional opposition to the mass conscriptions in France.²⁴⁹

The British Establishment was, like Ireland, augmented rapidly during the 1790s, and also on the cheap whenever possible.²⁵⁰ The militia, like the regular army, received but a little training, about a month or two, before they were considered ready for service.²⁵¹ As in Ireland, the English militia's ability for training was restricted by its dispersion around the country in quarters.²⁵² Indiscipline, crime and desertion were all problems in the English militia, but no worse problems than in the regulars at this time too.²⁵³ Steps were also taken, across the armed forces, to restrict the pay of officers who failed to promptly return from leave.²⁵⁴ As a whole the English militia remained loyal, like the Irish militia, but there were instances of breakdowns of discipline; high food prices caused the Oxfordshire Militia to mutiny in 1795, resulting in five executions, while rivalry between the Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire militias occasionally devolved into violence and rioting.²⁵⁵ Nelson argues that the English militia were, if anything, worse than the Irish militia in terms of discipline, due to the lack of experienced officers.²⁵⁶

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 75.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 98.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 100; Esdaile, 'The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars', p. 417.

²⁵⁰ Western, *The English militia*, p. 221.

²⁵¹ Ibid., p. 404.

²⁵² Ibid., p. 410.

²⁵³ Ibid., p. 418.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 423.

²⁵⁵ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 23; Western, *The English militia*, p. 427-8.

²⁵⁶ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 23.

As in Ireland, the English militia was often tasked with manning the coastal defences of Britain.²⁵⁷ Western makes the point that the militia was never tested to any great degree but that if it ‘had been involved in real fighting, on which the safety of the nation depended, then both the country gentlemen and the more talented army officers would have been more willing to serve in it – and also much more willing to forget their mutual jealousies.’²⁵⁸ Many of the officers in both militia and regulars were of very bad quality, as rapid augmentations and massive manpower demands put a great strain on the armed forces as a whole.²⁵⁹

CONCLUSIONS

The experiences of the Donegal Militia demonstrate the complex identity of the Irish militia, mistrusted by some yet responsible for the internal security of Ireland. In 1796, the militia was believed to be ‘ripe for revolt.’²⁶⁰ Yet during the rebellion, there were no mass defections or desertions and overall the militia performed well, defeating most of the rebels before reinforcements arrived from Britain. Later communications from Abbot and Castlereagh praise the militia in general terms, and Hardwicke thanked the Donegal regiment specifically for their actions during the war. During 1798, no Donegal Militiamen were reported to have joined the rebels or deserted their posts in battle, unlike other regiments around them.²⁶¹ A list of militiamen tried for disaffection and disloyalty in 1797 does not include any Donegal men.²⁶² Thus, it can be concluded that although political figures initially harboured some prejudices regarding the loyalty of the mostly Catholic militia, they were

²⁵⁷ Western, *The English militia*, p. 433.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 435.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 443.

²⁶⁰ Cooke to Pelham, 20 July 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/136).

²⁶¹ Herbert Taylor to Lord Clements, 12 Nov. 1798 (N.L.I., K.P., 1082/289); Stewart to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, Drogheda, 17 May 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/230); Littlehales to Clements, 29 Oct. 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/ 264).

²⁶² Nelson, *The Irish militia*, pp 172-3.

open to revising their opinions in light of the militia's good performance in 1798. The importance of loyalty, most strongly displayed by the Protestant Ascendancy in the form of armed loyalism, is also evident in the establishment of the Irish militia. This was a place where the competing identities of the Irish Catholic soldier, until then more closely associated with the armies of France and Spain, could find common ground with the Protestant Ascendancy identity, united under the cause of protecting home and hearth from attack. While the religious exclusivity of the Irish Brigade had caused it to fail, religious and social inclusion in the Irish militia represented a better way for British officials to harness the manpower and enthusiasm for military service that Ireland offered.

The success of the Donegal Militia is likely linked to the fact that they were fortunate to have excellent commanding officers in Conyngham, Clements and their second-in-command, Maxwell. There also appears to have been little tension between the officers, unlike some other regiments, such as the Dublin City Militia which recorded a violent dispute between senior officers and a subsequent court-martial.²⁶³ Conyngham represented a very old family tradition of military service and used his military and administrative experience to quickly create a cohesive unit with a strong sense of regimental pride. To Clements, whose family were relative newcomers to the Ascendancy, military service made up for a lack of an illustrious pedigree. Their professionalism and respect for the local population contrasts starkly with the brutality of Captain Swayne of the Cork Militia. During the rebellion, Maxwell proved to be a highly capable leader but it is important to acknowledge that strong leadership throughout the unit's existence, from all commanders, resulted in a disciplined, effective regiment.

In light of the strong link in the Donegal regiment between skilled officers and an effective militia unit, the disregard expressed by military and political authorities for Ascendancy officers is striking. Due to the militia commanders' links to the earlier

²⁶³ Gasper Erck to Gen. Craig, 20 Feb. 1801 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/292-3).

Volunteer movement, it is likely that there was a preconception that Ascendancy officers would be amateurish and potentially politicised. Although the militia's performance during active service was praise-worthy, it may be concluded that the actions of highly politicised commanders, such as Lord Downshire, and brutal officers, such as Swayne, at times overshadowed the positive contribution of certain Ascendancy officers such as Clements, Maxwell and others like them. Cornwallis' initial assessment of the militia certainly appears unbalanced, describing the militia as 'totally without discipline' and 'ferocious and cruel in the extreme.'²⁶⁴ It is likely that Cornwallis' opinion is also influenced by personal prejudices; he described the Lord Lieutenancy as his 'idea of perfect misery.'²⁶⁵

In modern scholarship, opinions of the Irish militia have been divided. It has been claimed that post-1798, the Irish yeomanry took over the role of counter-insurgency whilst the militia became a 'nursery' for the regulars,' a phrase often used to describe the militia after 1800.²⁶⁶ Nelson argues against this theory, claiming that the Yeomanry was never seen as an army as the militia was, and was more a local auxiliary force, rather than a part-time army as the militia was.²⁶⁷

The deployment of the Donegal Militia reflects the military strategy in Ireland; the Commander-in-Chief, Carhampton, pulled most forces closer to Dublin which he perceived as the main target for a French landing in 1795, while the Shannon was fortified as a defensive line to fall back upon in the event of a French landing.²⁶⁸ The maps below (Fig. 3.3-5) indicate the widespread deployment of the Donegal Militia, with the south and east being the main areas of operations. At each location where the regiment was deployed numerous smaller detachments were sent out to guard the local area, assisting the magistrates and generally acting as the police force that Ireland lacked during this period. It also

²⁶⁴ *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, ii, 357; Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 135.

²⁶⁵ *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, ii, 356.

²⁶⁶ Denman, 'Hibernia officina militum', p. 165.

²⁶⁷ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 255.

²⁶⁸ McEnery, *Fortress Ireland*, p. 44; Kerrigan, *Castles and fortifications in Ireland*, p. 153.

demonstrates how the wide scale militarisation in Europe had an effect right down to the level of several soldiers being sent to guard small towns and villages in Ireland, and how they were expected to contend not only with external aggression but also with internal insurrection.

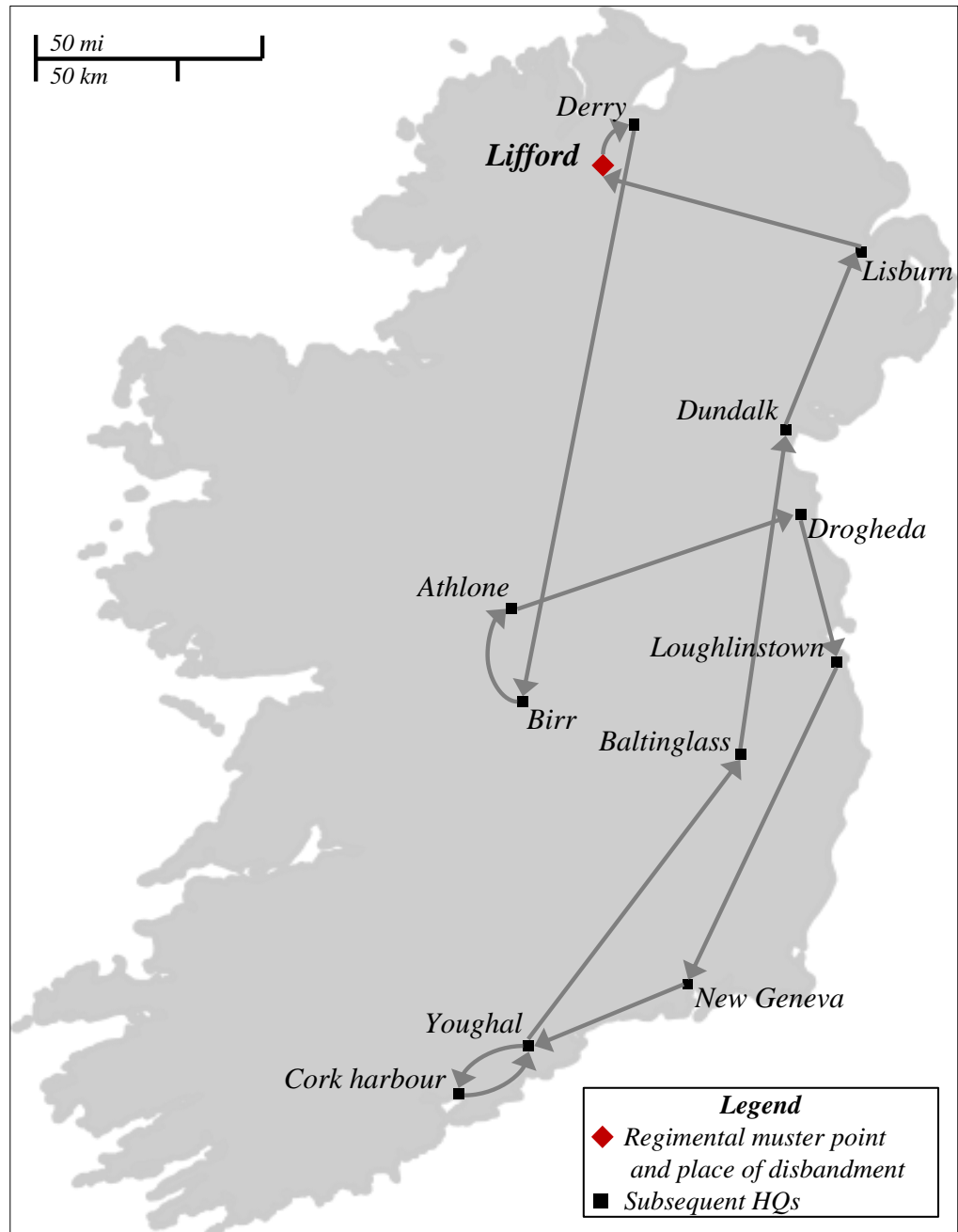


Fig. 3.3: Areas of service of the Donegal Militia (1793-1802)

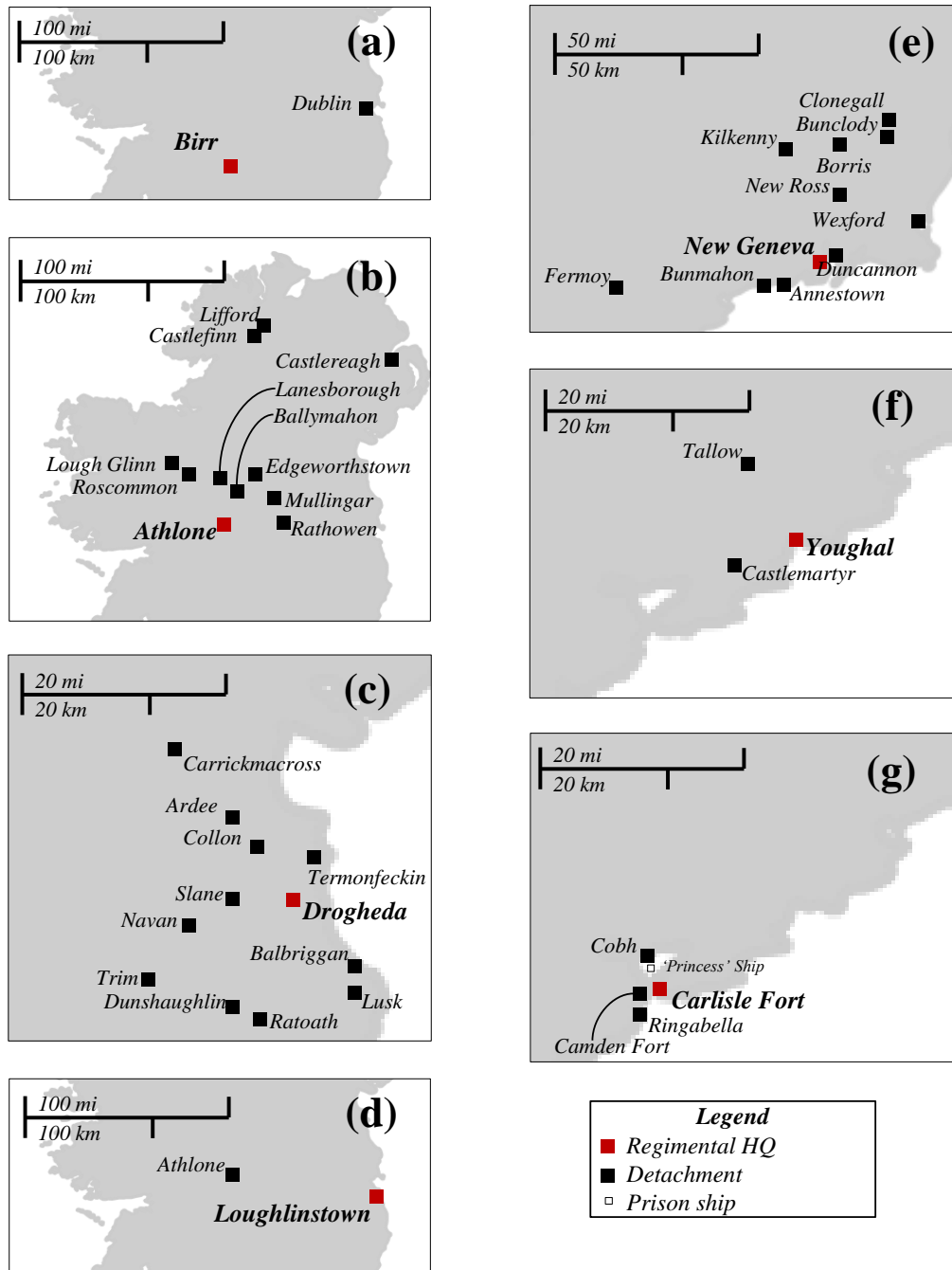


Fig. 3.4: Detachments of the Donegal Militia (1793-1802)

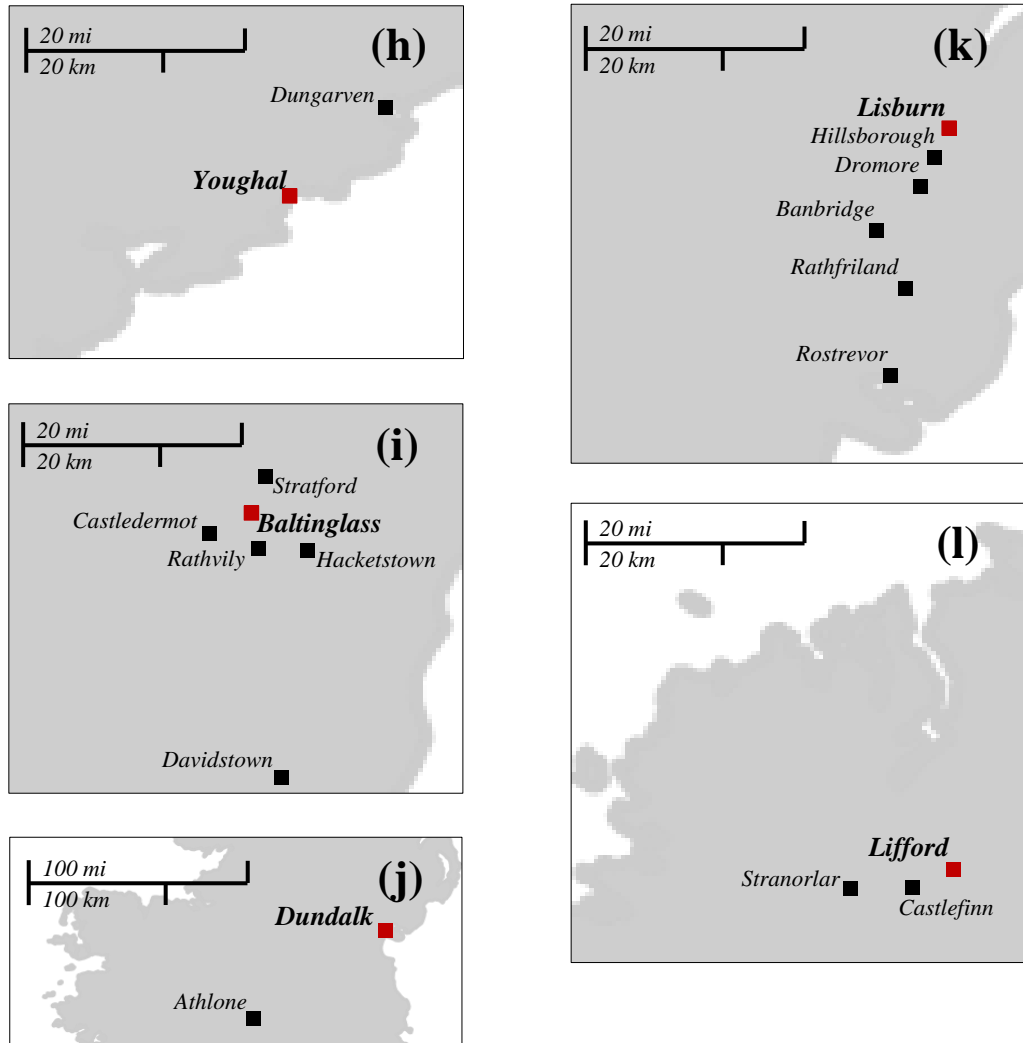


Fig. 3.5: Detachments of the Donegal Militia (1793-1802) (contd.)

The records of the Donegal Militia examined in this chapter further demonstrate how the militia was still used extensively after the rebellion, and was active up until the Peace of Amiens; the Donegal Militia was busy guarding Cork Harbour as well as maintaining law and order with the local population there, and later in Baltinglass and then throughout Ulster. This active service beyond 1798, along with the praise of the authorities in Britain and Ireland, indicate that whilst imperfect, the Irish militia remained an essential part of the security of Ireland. The militia was indeed useful for army recruitment; Cornwallis' opinion of the militia improved significantly as he realised the potential offered by allowing the

militia to volunteer to the regular army.²⁶⁹ The yeomanry did grow and take on significant policing duties. Yet, the experiences of the Donegal Militia do not suggest that the authorities favoured one formation over the other. Furthermore, the militia was embodied again in 1803 until 1816, and it may be reasoned that if the militia had truly been a failure, or unworkable, it would not have been embodied again.

In the broader social context, the history of the Irish militia illustrates the burgeoning acceptance of Irish Catholics in Protestant-dominated institutions. Granting the defence of the kingdom to Irishmen signified that Catholics were beginning to gain the trust of the British government. Allowing the militia to volunteer for the line indicated the government's faith in the mostly Catholic militiamen. Yet, the British and Irish governments constantly had to strike a balance between securing the support of the Protestant Ascendancy and the loyalty of the Catholic majority, whilst making the best use of Ireland's manpower resources in a time of ever increasing warfare. The Irish militia would provide a large number of the recruits that fought successfully in the coming years, in particular in the Irish regiments that fought under Wellington in the Peninsula.²⁷⁰ The Donegal regiment, along with the rest of the Irish militia, was embodied again from 1803 until 1816. Despite attempted invasions and brief, but violent insurrections, Ireland remained largely secure during the course of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, and the Irish militia played a vital role in this.

²⁶⁹ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 238.

²⁷⁰ McAnally, *The Irish militia*, p. 289.

CHAPTER 5

‘GOOD AND LOYAL PRINCIPLES’: THE IRISH YEOMANRY

In early 1796 dissatisfaction with the Irish militia convinced the British authorities to approve the establishment of the yeomanry corps. As seen in the previous chapter, the Irish militia did not entirely fall out of favour. Rather, the yeomanry rapidly augmented the existing garrison. The yeomanry represented the Ascendancy defence tradition, and demonstrated the Irish government’s opportunistic arming of the loyalist element of Irish society, against internal insurrection and external aggression. Previous studies have examined the yeomanry in a military context, yet this formation has particular importance in the wider context of social and religious history of Ireland, which is often overlooked.¹

The legacy of Volunteerism played a strong role in the formation of the yeomanry; fear of a similar movement informed government’s decision to establish it, while the strong Protestant defence tradition that had previously manifested in the Volunteers motivated Protestant enthusiasm for the yeomanry. In this chapter, the links between the yeomanry and the Irish Volunteers of the 1780s are explored; the Doneraile Yeomanry Corps, a successor to the Doneraile Rangers Volunteer Corps, is taken as a case study to determine how influential this heritage of the Ascendancy defence tradition was in the establishment and activities of the newer yeomanry corps.

The yeomanry soon became closely associated with the Protestant religion whilst the militia was more associated with Catholicism, although neither formation was religiously exclusive. Both formations were tasked with the defence of Ireland, particularly during 1798.

¹ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, ‘Tommy Downshire’s Boys’; *Double traitors*; P. M. Kerrigan, ‘A corps of yeomanry gunners in Ireland, 1805-06: The Loughlinstown Gunners’ in *Irish Sword*, xv (1982-3), pp 188-91.

Yet their experience of the wars was markedly different; the militia was rotated around the country and used to source men for the line, while the yeomanry defended their own communities, both people and property. Therefore the contrast between the Irish yeomanry and the Irish militia will also be explored, to gain insight into the social, religious and political factors that led the experiences of the yeomanry to be so different to those of the militia.

ORIGINS OF THE YEOMANRY: VOLUNTEERISM AND THE DONERAILE RANGERS

Origins of the Protestant defence tradition

In the Middle Ages, the term ‘yeoman’ was used to describe a servant of a royal or noble household, and usually one who offered military service.² It was this tradition of the yeoman upholding the position of his betters, as well as his own position against change, that would characterise later examples of yeomanry, as the tradition was carried from England to Ireland during the plantation period.³ By the eighteenth-century, the large garrison in Ireland was considered necessary to keep the country at peace. Bartlett and Jeffrey note that such a large garrison may have been ‘unthinkable in England’ but was considered a normal and everyday presence in Ireland.⁴

The Protestant community felt they owed their position, and even existence, to their ancestors’ ‘military prowess.’⁵ From these sentiments, a tradition of self-defence grew amongst the Protestant settlers, and many banded together in official or semi-official armed groups to defend their communities from attacks by disaffected parts of society, such as

² Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 40.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Bartlett and Jeffrey, ‘An Irish military tradition?’, p.8.

⁵ *Ibid.*

various Catholic secret societies.⁶ ‘Boyne societies’ were formed by veterans of the Williamite army of the 1690s, and may be seen as a precursor of the later Orange Order which was formed in 1796.⁷ As Catholics were officially barred from the British army, military service in the eighteenth-century may also be seen as Protestant privilege, a manner of self-assertion as well as an expression of loyalty to the monarch.

Formation of the Irish Volunteers

In the 1770s American colonists rose in rebellion against British rule. The pursuit of greater liberty and representation by the Americans was looked upon with favour by certain Irish politicians, and protests were made in favour of the rebels and against the war. Large numbers of troops on the Irish Establishment were withdrawn to fight in America and this, combined with the entry of France and Spain into the war on the side of the colonists, brought the threat of invasion to Ireland.⁸ A militia was proposed in 1778 to defend Ireland but the government was unwilling to finance such a venture and as a result, private armed groups known as Volunteers were formed to defend Ireland against an enemy landing. As no militia existed at this time, and Ireland did not yet have a national police force, the role of keeping the peace fell to the Volunteers, supporting the local magistrates. Volunteering became very popular during the American war, with numbers rapidly rising to almost 89000 members in 1782.⁹

One of these units was the Doneraile Rangers Volunteer corps, which was formed in July 1779. This initial meeting was held at the private house of an innkeeper, Thomas Ahern, and chaired by St. Leger St. Leger, Lord Doneraile, illustrating the localised, independent

⁶ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 41.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁸ McDowell, ‘Colonial nationalism and the winning of parliamentary independence’ in Moody and Vaughan, *A new history of Ireland: vol. IV Eighteenth century Ireland 1691-1800* (Oxford, 1986), pp 196-235, at p. 215.

⁹ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 44.

nature of the Volunteers, and its middle to upper class composition.¹⁰ It may be no coincidence that the meeting was held on 12 July, the date of the Battle of the Boyne and the Protestant victory of William of Orange. Lord Doneraile, a local landlord, M.P. and magnate with a home and demesne in the town of Doneraile, County Cork, was unanimously appointed the colonel of the society.¹¹ With an ancestral connection with Ireland since Tudor times, the St. Leger family were a typical Ascendancy family. Members of the family had been involved in politics and the military since arriving in Ireland; Sir Anthony St. Leger, for example, was lord deputy of Ireland six times in the sixteenth-century.¹²

As a high-ranking member of the Ascendancy and local landlord, Doneraile would have welcomed the chance to add to his family's military reputation, and social status. By raising a corps of Volunteers, Lord Doneraile was continuing his family's long tradition of military service; his own grandfather, Arthur St. Leger, had commanded a regiment of foot whilst his uncle, Hayes St. Leger, had been a captain in Maryson's Regiment of Foot, colonel of Arthur St. Leger's regiment of foot and a cornet of the 8th Regiment of Dragoons.¹³ Another ancestor, Sir Richard Aldworth, had been Provost-Marshal for Munster.¹⁴ The St. Leger family were also closely associated with the Freemasons, and Elizabeth St. Leger (later Aldworth), is reputed to be the only woman ever officially initiated into a lodge, after she overheard a Freemason meeting at Doneraile Court.¹⁵ The Volunteers had close ties with the Freemasons, and lodges often formed corps.¹⁶

¹⁰ Minutes of a meeting of the Doneraile Rangers, 12 July 1779 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

¹¹ Minutes of a meeting of the Doneraile Rangers, 12 July 1779 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155); Sir Egerton Brydges, *A biographical peerage of Ireland* (London, 1817), p. 272.

¹² Brydges, *A biographical peerage*, pp 267-72; 'Sir Anthony St Leger (1496?-1559)' Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (2 July 2013).

¹³ Susan O'Loughlen and Ciara McDonnell, 'The Doneraile Papers,' p. 155 (<http://www.nli.ie/pdfs/mss%20lists/doneraile.pdf>) (2 July 2013).

¹⁴ Edmund Lodge, *The genealogy of the existing British Peerage* (London, 1832), p. 115.

¹⁵ 'Elizabeth Aldworth (1692/5?-1772)' Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (29 May 2013).

¹⁶ Higgins, *A nation of politicians*, p. 10.

Notably, the uniform of the corps received much attention during the formation of the corps, illustrating the importance of military pageantry to those establishing the corps.¹⁷ Higgins describes this ‘craze’ for military uniforms making its way into everyday life, as Volunteers wore their uniforms at every opportunity, eager to emulate a heroic ideal of both masculinity and Irishness.¹⁸ The committee decided that the uniform of the society was to be ‘of Irish manufacture, the regimentals to be of scarlet trimmed with green, white waistcoat and breeches and frocks green edged with scarlet.’¹⁹ The stipulation that the uniform was to be of Irish manufacture indicates both a patriotic spirit as well as a practical outlook, as local goods would have cost less than importing materials.

The officers were elected by ballot, unlike the regular army where appointments were made by a centralised command; Blackstock describes the government as ‘alarmed’ by the proto-democratic election of the officers from the ranks.²⁰ Despite these democratic overtones, family patronage still dominated in corps such as the Doneraile Rangers. The Honourable Hayes St. Leger, Lord Doneraile’s eldest son, was appointed captain of the cavalry, while two more sons were appointed captain of the infantry and chaplain.²¹ The remaining officers were respectable local Protestant gentlemen of the middle and upper classes, indicating the close, local character of the Volunteers. Furthermore, the corps was to be funded by contributions by its own members, and the men were therefor able to consider themselves independent of the central authority. Privates, sergeants and corporals were to pay eleven shillings and four pence, subalterns one guinea, captains two guineas and the colonel four guineas to defray the expenses of the society, while a drill sergeant to instruct military discipline was decided upon, as was a trumpeter and fife player.²² The strong Protestant identity of the corps may be seen in the choice of 4 November as the anniversary

¹⁷ Minutes of a meeting of the Doneraile Rangers, 12 July 1779 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

¹⁸ Higgins, *A nation of politicians*, pp 166-7.

¹⁹ Minutes of a meeting of the Doneraile Rangers, 12 July 1779 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

²⁰ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 43.

²¹ Minutes of a meeting of the Doneraile Rangers, 12 July 1779 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

²² Minutes of a meeting, Doneraile Rangers, 16 Aug. 1779 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

day of the society, William III's birthday.²³ All across Ireland, the respectable men of society were joining up to defend their country; the second battalion of the Wexford Independent Militia was formed at a meeting at the house of John Dixon, also an innkeeper, in August 1779, and explicitly outlined its purpose being 'for the defence and preservation of the internal peace of the country.'²⁴ Each officer was expected to bring a certain number of recruits, fully equipped and clothed, to the corps.²⁵ This was another way in which local citizens could demonstrate their prestige, by bringing in the most recruits as well as being well turned-out.

Anti-Catholicism within the Irish Volunteers

While the Freemasons may have allowed suitable Catholics to join their ranks, the Volunteers were a strongly Protestant formation, and some of the more conservative corps actively excluded Catholics from joining, and were extremely distrusting of the idea of Catholics bearing arms.²⁶ However, other Volunteer corps did allow Catholics, sometimes after taking an oath of allegiance.²⁷ While there is no evidence to suggest that the Doneraile Rangers were anti-Catholic as a unit, Doneraile himself was very conservative and displayed strong anti-Catholic tendencies. In 1780 Doneraile was charged with whipping an elderly Catholic priest, Fr Neale, who had criticised the brother of Doneraile's mistress.²⁸ A lawyer named John Philpot Curran took up the priest's seemingly hopeless case and successfully defended him, forcing Doneraile to pay thirty guineas compensation.²⁹ It was completely unexpected at this time for a Protestant landlord to be held accountable for his actions against a lower-class Catholic, and demonstrates how attitudes towards Catholics were

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Minutes of a meeting, Wexford Independent Militia, 24 Aug. 1779 (N.L.I., Grogan Papers, MS 11093).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Higgins, *A nation of politicians*, pp 147-9.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 148.

²⁸ *The speeches of the Right Honorable John Philpot Curran*, ed. Thomas David (3rd ed., Dublin, 1871), xvi-ii.

²⁹ Ibid., xvii.

changing in Ireland. The case also boosted the career of Curran, who became a prominent advocate for Catholic relief in the 1790s, a Whig M.P. and even defended some of the United Irishmen, before and after the rebellion.³⁰

Political radicalism within the Irish Volunteers

It is interesting that despite being formed to protect against the threat of insurrection, the Volunteers themselves posed a greater threat to stability than the supposedly disaffected and rebellious Catholic peasantry. The Volunteers came to represent the military arm of the Protestant Ascendancy, loyal to the British crown yet acting in their own best interests, and not always in line with the British (or Irish) government's wishes. The Volunteers became a platform for reform in Ireland, as their commanders were members of the Ascendancy and often influential politicians. The Volunteers supported the more radical and Whiggish Irish politicians, the Patriot Party, who pressed for parliamentary and economic reforms as well as Catholic relief. A number of these ventures were successful, such as Free Trade and the legislative independence of the Irish parliament, the so-called 'Constitution of 1782.'³¹ In January 1780 the Doneraile Rangers resolved to send an address to the Lord Lieutenant, expressing the gratitude of the society for the granting of Free Trade for Ireland, which was to be published in the *Dublin Evening Post*.³² This move indicates that despite being a relatively small Volunteer corps, the Doneraile Rangers wished to publicly demonstrate a level of involvement in political affairs. The Volunteers represent how Irishmen were becoming more politicised in the late eighteenth-century; Volunteerism was an expression of national pride as well as a national identity.³³ In April the society resolved unanimously that the declaration for the legislative independence of the Irish parliament, by a convention of

³⁰ 'John Philpot Curran (1750-1817)' Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (30 May 2013).

³¹ Duffy, *The concise history of Ireland*, pp 122-34.

³² Minutes of a meeting of the Doneraile Rangers, 1 Jan. 1780 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers Ms 12155).

³³ Higgins, *A nation of politicians*, p. 242

Volunteers in Ulster the previous February, was ‘spirited and rational’ and that those gentlemen deserved the society’s ‘praise, thanks and imitation.’³⁴

The Volunteers also acted as a pressure group when attempts were made to displace the Volunteers with state-raised (and controlled) fencible regiments, raised for the defence of Ireland. At a meeting in 1782, the Doneraile Rangers noted that new regiments were ‘unnecessary and dangerous’ to their situation and resolved to ‘crush the obnoxious plan,’ threatening to stop assisting with navy recruitment.³⁵ Given the importance of the Royal Navy to British strategy, this was a strong statement to make. While the Volunteers may have paraded and displayed loyalty to Ireland and George III, there was a certain fluidity of identity; they styled themselves as loyal members of society and the British Empire yet were not above threatening their own government over localised, Irish affairs. They were not willing to give up any of their influence by permitting the government to raise fencible regiments. This extreme behaviour indicates the government’s lack of control over the Volunteers, and also highlights how small-scale events in Ireland could have wider ramifications for British military strategy.

The decline of the Volunteers

As the war in America came to an end, the Volunteer movement slowed down considerably. Senior figures who had achieved their objectives with the reforms now left the corps and numbers dwindled.³⁶ Some Volunteers would reappear in the militia and yeomanry, whilst others of more radical leanings would reappear in the ranks of the United Irishmen. The Doneraile Rangers did meet once more in late 1792, where several new members were admitted into the corps and a resolution was made to assist the magistrates, if called upon, to quell any ‘lawless or riotous mob,’ a function that the militia and yeomanry would fulfil in

³⁴ Minutes of meeting of the Doneraile Rangers, 14 Apr. 1782 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

³⁵ Minutes of a meeting of the Doneraile Rangers 13 Oct. 1782 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

³⁶ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 48.

the coming years.³⁷ Government had made a significant mistake in refusing to finance a militia in the 1780s, as they had inadvertently handed the responsibility of Ireland's defence to the Volunteer commanders.³⁸ The Volunteers displayed symbolic resistance that held the potential for destabilisation and even rebellion. The British authorities also feared the potential danger that powerful local figures, backed with military might, posed to political and social stability; the meteoric rise of Napoleon in the 1790s, who went from artillery captain to emperor in just over a decade, illustrates that their fear was credible.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE IRISH YEOMANRY

The need for a local defence force

The Volunteer movement resurfaced briefly following the French Revolution, but the British authorities were unwilling to allow private armies to operate in Ireland again. They suppressed the Volunteers, replacing them with the state-controlled Irish militia in 1793, to avoid a resurgence of the radical nationalism which the Volunteers represented.³⁹ However, there was still a need for a local defence force, as Ireland did not possess a national police force at this time. Town watchmen were employed in some urban areas but law and order was mostly maintained by the military. While the militia had some law and order duties, their main role was as a counter-invasion force. Furthermore, their regular rotations around the country left a need for a local defence force, to stabilise the country at a local level.

In England, volunteer units were being raised and were not perceived as a threat by authorities as they did not have a strong political agenda.⁴⁰ However, given the legacy of the Irish Volunteers, a similar approach would not work for Ireland. Attempts were made by the

³⁷ Minutes of meeting 19 Dec. 1792 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

³⁸ McDowell, 'Colonial nationalism and the winning of parliamentary independence', pp 216-22.

³⁹ See Chapter 4.

⁴⁰ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 58.

Lord Lieutenant, Earl Fitzwilliam, to instead create a yeomanry that included the Catholic population. However the conservatives' opposition to Catholic Relief, combined with that of the king's, resulted in Fitzwilliam's recall and the planned yeomanry of 1795 was abandoned.⁴¹

Irish society was becoming increasingly unstable, with frequent clashes between the pro-Catholic Defenders society and Protestant loyalist groups such as the Peep O'Day Boys.⁴² After a particularly violent clash in Armagh in September, known as 'the battle of the Diamond,' the Orange Order was formed to promote Protestant loyalism and protect Protestants from sectarian attacks.⁴³ While the government disliked the sectarian aspects of the order, it recognised the importance of it as an ally against pro-Catholic radical nationalists.⁴⁴

Proto-versions of the yeomanry

The enthusiasm of the Ascendancy for a loyal defence force, inspired by their military tradition, may be seen in the proto-versions of the yeomanry, as independent 'armed associations' were formed by men loyal to government but also determined to defend their people and properties.⁴⁵ In early 1796 a magistrate named W. C. Lindsay, from County Tyrone, wrote to the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Thomas Pelham, regarding the establishment of a local defence force.⁴⁶ Lindsay asked that the Earl of Camden, Fitzwilliam's replacement as Lord Lieutenant, be notified about the alarming state of his neighbourhood and suggested in order to maintain the peace 'an armed association something like the armed yeomanry in England would most effectively do this, and many of my neighbours, respectable farmers, whom I have reason to believe are of good and loyal

⁴¹ McDowell, 'Revolution and the union', pp 343-5.

⁴² Ibid., p. 347.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 53.

⁴⁶ Lindsay to Pelham, 28 Jan. 1796 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1015/3).

principles are willing to form such an association.’⁴⁷ These armed associations are seen as forerunners of the Irish yeomanry, independently organised and later replaced by the yeomanry.⁴⁸

The tone of this communication indicates the strong Protestant identity that was envisaged for the yeomanry; it would be composed of ‘respectable farmers,’ who would have most likely been fellow Protestants and loyal supporters of the Ascendancy, if not members of the Ascendancy themselves. Lindsay himself, as a local magistrate, was a respectable member of society and the reference to ‘good and loyal principles’ connotes reliability, respectability, and an absence of political radicalism, which would have made these early armed associations attractive to the authorities who, at this early stage of the wars, had reservations about the reliability of the militia.⁴⁹

Similar concerns were reported to the Chief Secretary in March 1796, describing disturbances in County Cavan.⁵⁰ Plunderers had attacked parishioners who in turn wished to associate for their own protection. The author of the report had dissuaded them from doing so as he expected the government to send troops to assist. The formation of ‘Orange Boys’ is also mentioned; as this was the year that the Orange Order was established. As the regulars and militia were intended for counter invasion roles another formation was needed to act as a local defence force, defending the loyal inhabitants from both insurrection and common banditry.

Establishment of the Irish yeomanry

Disaffection continued to grow in 1796, with large parts of Ulster proclaimed under the Insurrection Act, and suspected disaffection harshly suppressed.⁵¹ In August Camden warned

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p.55.

⁴⁹ See Ch. 4 for more details of attitudes towards the militia.

⁵⁰ Letter to Pelham, 7 Mar. 1796 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1015/6).

⁵¹ McDowell, ‘Revolution and the union’, p. 353.

the Home Secretary, the Duke of Portland, that the existing garrison was spread extremely thinly around the country and unprepared to face both an invasion and an insurrection. He claimed that a yeomanry cavalry, raised upon similar lines to the yeomanry of England, would give ‘much relief’ to the army in Ireland, provided they were raised with the authority of parliament, again highlighting the government’s desire to avoid an independent armed defence force.⁵²

Eventually, in late 1796 the Irish yeomanry was officially established as a part-time local defence force, with both cavalry and infantry units, depending on the locality. Officers would be commissioned by the lord lieutenant, and when they were put on permanent duty under local military commanders, the men would receive full-time pay from the government, thereby maintaining control over the yeomanry, unlike the previous Volunteer movement.⁵³ The yeomanry may be seen as a reactionary force, mobilised in order to rapidly increase the garrison and harness the potential of the loyalist population who wished to continue their military tradition influenced by the strong conservative identity of the Protestant Ascendancy.⁵⁴ While individual yeomanry corps were often small, they were very widespread; there were approximately 879 corps operating in Ireland by late 1803.⁵⁵

Not all offers of raising yeomanry corps were taken up however, as the following letter illustrates. Pelham wrote to Cornelius Grogan of County Wexford, informing him that the lord lieutenant had been decided that the offer made by men of the barony of Forth, County Wexford, to form a yeomanry corps was not necessary at the present time, but their ‘distinguished loyalty and zeal’ had made a ‘deep impression’ on him.⁵⁶ Pelham explained that there were already several yeomanry corps formed in Wexford but that if any future emergencies occurred he would accept their offer to ‘come forward in defence of their ‘King

⁵² Camden to Portland, 6 Aug. 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/161).

⁵³ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 72; McDowell, ‘Revolution and the union’, p. 353.

⁵⁴ For a full list of yeomanry corps in Ireland in 1803, see Appendix 3.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Pelham to Grogan, 5 Dec. 1796 (N.L.I., Grogan Papers, MS 11093).

and Constitution.⁵⁷ The Irish government may have wished to take advantage of the Ascendancy's enthusiasm for military service but the practical concerns of how to pay these men still remained, they could not afford to take on every man that wished to enlist.

THE DONERAILE YEOMANRY: AN ASCENDANCY TRADITION CONTINUED

Origins of the Doneraile Yeomanry

The Doneraile Yeomanry Cavalry, which was formed on 16 October 1796, was in many ways a continuation of the earlier Doneraile Volunteers.⁵⁸ There were many former Volunteers in the new corps, including Hayes St. Leger, son of the previous viscount and now Viscount Doneraile himself, and Nicholas G. Evans, who was appointed captain of the corps.⁵⁹ Hayes St. Leger, 2nd Viscount Doneraile, was nominally a private in the corps, but as a member of the House of Lords and commander of the South Cork Militia, he was unable to partake in full service with the corps.⁶⁰ His brother, Richard St. Leger was also continuing the family tradition of military participation, but in the Madras Light Cavalry of the East India Company rather than the British army.⁶¹

The yeomanry were often closely associated with the Orange Order, especially in the loyalist stronghold of Ulster, where the order originated. The Fort Edward Yeomanry Cavalry, for example, were all members of the local Orange Order Lodge.⁶² The Doneraile Cavalry, due to its distance from Ulster, did not experience the same level of Orange

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Minutes of a meeting of the Doneraile Yeomanry, 16 Oct. 1796 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁵⁹ Minutes of a meeting of the Doneraile yeomanry cavalry, 31 Oct. 1796 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁶⁰ Hayes St. Leger, 2nd Viscount Doneraile (1755-1819), *The complete peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom* (London, 13 vols, 1916), iv, 397; Sylvanus Urban, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, lxxxix (1819) p. 467.

⁶¹ *The Asiatic journal and monthly register for British India and its dependencies*, xvi (1823), p. 209.

⁶² William Banks, *The history of the Orange Order* (Toronto, 1898), p. 29.

influence and the evidence suggests that the yeomen as a whole did not display any strong opposition to Catholics, apart from the previously mentioned incident between the elder Doneraile and the priest.

Government regulation of the yeomanry

The role of the Doneraile Yeomanry corps was explicitly stated as neighbourhood defence ‘under the command of officers to be appointed by government and conformable to the plan authorised by government.’⁶³ This new, conformist agenda was markedly different to the old ethos of the Volunteer corps. By creating the framework for a force that would work with government, rather than against it, the Irish government avoided some of the difficulties previously associated with private armies commanded by Irish Ascendancy members; rather than acting in their own interests and to improve their own position, centrally-commanded formations could be expected to support the overall stability of Ireland and to a greater extent, the British empire. This time, the authorities in Dublin Castle and Westminster successfully harnessed Ascendancy military tradition, having learned lessons from the Irish Volunteers.

The Doneraile Cavalry consisted of thirty-six troopers in Evans’ corps, along with a corps of infantry.⁶⁴ The corps may not seem very large, especially when compared to militia regiments which usually contained more than one hundred men. However the militia were organised as county units, with a large recruitment area. The yeomanry, by their localised nature, were usually smaller in number; infantry corps averaged one hundred men whilst cavalry averaged fifty men.⁶⁵ Corps could be much smaller however, depending on the local area and sometimes only averaged twenty or thirty men. Larger corps were sometimes named ‘legions,’ such as the Loyal Cork Legion, which consisted of six companies based in Cork city. The use of this term to describe an amateur auxiliary unit was likely intended to

⁶³ Minutes of a meeting, 16 Oct. 1796 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁶⁴ Minutes of meetings, 16 and 31 Oct. 1796 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁶⁵ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 98.

draw favourable comparisons between the yeomanry and the all-conquering legions of Ancient Rome.

The yeomen were to be paid by Evans only for the first month and thereafter by government.⁶⁶ Whereas the Volunteers had supported the cost of their unit themselves, paying a subscription fee and the cost of their equipment, now the government equipped and paid the men, eliminating the financial independence of the old Volunteer tradition.⁶⁷ While some officers may have commissioned weapons from private weapon-makers, the men were issued with weapons from government stores.⁶⁸ As such, the Protestant defence tradition would now be more closely tied, financially, to the interests of government, thereby garnering more control and loyalty, but this also increased the pressure on supplying the forces. The establishment of the yeomanry would lessen the need for the militia, at a time when the militia was still regarded as unreliable by many of the Ascendancy and even some regular army commanders due to its lack of discipline and the large proportion of Catholics in the ranks. As the previous chapter has demonstrated, the militia was not in as bad a condition as it was said to have been, but these opinions were still influential in how the yeomanry developed.

Military pageantry within the Doneraile Yeomanry

In the early months of the corps' existence, most meetings focused on deciding which particular type of jacket or hat they would use.⁶⁹ The uniform of the corps was decided to be like the 1st Irish Fencible Regiment of Cavalry, with the colours scarlet and blue, and the

⁶⁶ Pelham to Evans, 1 Dec. 1796 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ John King to the Commissioners of Transport, 20 April 1795 (N.L.I., K.P., MS 1003/57). Many of the weapons would have been mass-produced; a 1796 light cavalry sabre (used by the yeomanry and regulars), found in County Meath and now in the possession of the author, does not appear to bear any craftsman's mark or identification.

⁶⁹ Minutes of a meeting of the Doneraile Yeomanry, 31 Oct., 6, 13 and 26 Nov. 1796 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

corps was to be equipped with helmets rather than cocked hats.⁷⁰ This extensive fastidiousness of the senior officers of the corps regarding their uniform emphasises the role of aesthetics in the Protestant defence tradition, as well as the amateur nature of the corps. The Doneraile Rangers had also spent considerable time debating their uniform details in 1779.⁷¹ Military pageantry would have attracted more members and demonstrated their prestige in society.

The importance of social rank and the interwoven nature of the military and society in the eighteenth-century are evident in the efforts put into the visual aspect of the yeomanry corps. It is also significant that while the dress and appearance of the Doneraile Yeomanry corps warranted inclusion in the minutes of their meeting, there is little mention of practical training for the corps.⁷² This lack of professional training was common throughout the Irish Establishment, as few of the officers had previous practical military experience, and may suggest that the Ascendancy officers were more interested in the pageantry of military life than the more practical aspects such as drilling, discipline and manoeuvres. This lack of training and practical experience was a problem in both the militia and yeomanry; inexperienced commanders had to rely on newly published training manuals, such as those by Sir David Dundas, in order to form a cohesively drilled unit.⁷³

The application procedure of the corps also suggests that the corps was as much a social unit as a military unit; to join the Doneraile Yeomanry, an applicant had to be proposed by a current member of the corps, and a vote was held on whether to admit the applicant or not. Again, this procedure was quite different to the militia, which struggled to

⁷⁰ Minutes of a meeting of the Doneraile Yeomanry 13 Nov. 1796 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155). See Ch. 6 for more details of the 1st Irish Fencible Cavalry.

⁷¹ Minutes of a meeting of the Doneraile Rangers, 12 July 1779 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁷² Minutes of a meeting of the Doneraile Yeomanry, 6 Nov. 1796 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁷³ David Dundas, *Principles of military movements, chiefly applied to infantry* (London, 1788); Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 75; Mallinson, *The making of the British army*, p. 135.

find enough recruits to fill the ranks, and it may be reasoned that being part of a yeomanry corps brought a certain level of prestige and standing in society.

The Doneraile Yeomanry as a military and social unit

The yeomanry were an amateur force; yet steps were taken by individual officers to improve the quality of the troops. The Doneraile Cavalry officers expected their men to be prompt and to act in a professional manner. Any of the members of the corps who did not attend guard duties were fined as were those who did not attend parades on the exercise days of Wednesday and Sunday.⁷⁴ If a member absented himself from three parades without a justifiable excuse he would be expelled from the corps. These regulations would ensure against the problem of absenteeism, something which greatly plagued the officer corps of the militia, where being absent without leave carried the threat of arrest.⁷⁵ The threat of a fine was an effective way of avoiding this in the yeomanry, and the high fines (upwards of a guinea in most cases) reflect the wealthier composition of the corps.

The various rules and regulations established by the Doneraile Yeomanry illustrate the problems associated with an amateur armed formation in Ireland, in particular the need for discipline, and how the officers sought to avoid ill-discipline amongst the men, and towards their locality. Any complaints made to the commanding officer would be investigated by a board of inquiry, consisting of five members appointed by the commanding officer.⁷⁶ Offenders who were found guilty were liable to be fined, publically reprimanded or expelled from the corps. Fines were a common punishment in the yeomanry, as was the public disgrace that followed dismissal from a corps, especially as the names of offenders were posted on the local church door.⁷⁷ This again indicates the deeply ingrained local mentality of the yeomanry, where peer pressure was a pressing factor in how a yeoman

⁷⁴ Minutes of meetings of the Doneraile Yeomanry, 5 Jan. and 12 Feb. 1797 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁷⁵ Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 19 Nov. 1793 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

⁷⁶ Minutes of meeting of the Doneraile Yeomanry, 1 Apr. 1797 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁷⁷ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 105.

behaved. It also reflects the Protestant military tradition, and the wish to avoid tarnishing the identity of the loyal Irish Protestant, protecting his kinsmen and neighbourhood.

While Doneraile was located over sixty miles from Bantry Bay, the whole of the south experienced an influx of troops in late December as reports of the French invasion fleet arrived.⁷⁸ Pelham relayed Camden's confidence in the yeomanry's 'loyalty and zeal', a phrase that had previously been used by Earl Fitzwilliam to describe the Irish Brigade and Irish Catholics.⁷⁹ He also praised their discretion in not risking 'the internal peace and protection' of the neighbourhood by 'giving way to a laudable ardour for general service.'⁸⁰ This preference for keeping the yeomanry in their own localities had two advantages. Firstly, by remaining in their locality they had a very real incentive to protect their neighbours and properties. Secondly, if they had joined the regulars or militia on permanent duty, the men would be entitled to extra pay, which would have increased the financial burden of the war for the Irish government.

The role of the yeomanry was reaffirmed in the aftermath of the invasion scare. Pelham, in January 1797, communicated the lord lieutenant's 'highest satisfaction' with the 'spirited loyalty' of the Doneraile Cavalry and their 'determination to preserve the peace of the town and its neighbourhood.'⁸¹ The 'noblemen and gentlemen' of the Irish yeomanry received Camden's praise, due to their enthusiasm for taking over garrison duties as the militia and regulars were rushed to the south.⁸² Camden also praised the fact that even men with an income of several thousand pounds a year were taking part in escort duties and acting as express rider, carrying vital communications through the adverse winter conditions, a propaganda boost to improve morale in the wake of the embarrassment that a French fleet

⁷⁸ Circular, Pelham to Evans, 26 Dec. 1796 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁷⁹ Circular, Pelham to Evans, 26 Dec. 1796 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155); Fitzwilliam, 15 Jan. 1795 (T.N.A., H.O., 30/1, f. 209).

⁸⁰ Circular, Pelham to Evans, 26 Dec. 1796 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁸¹ John Forster to Evans, 18 Jan. 1796 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁸² *London Gazette*, 14 Jan. 1797.

had come so close to landing an invasion force.⁸³ The Dublin corps was glowingly described as containing the ‘most respectable barristers, attorneys, merchants, gentlemen and citizens’, indicating the prestige that was associated with yeomanry membership, a prestige that was not shared with membership of the militia.⁸⁴

The Doneraile Yeomanry strongly supported a tradition of family and patronage, as previously seen in the Doneraile Rangers. While Viscount Doneraile was only a private in the corps he used his high position in Ascendancy society to the advantage of the corps, applying to Pelham ‘in the most pressing terms’ for an augmentation of the corps in April 1797.⁸⁵ Evans and his two lieutenants, Robert Crone and John Grove White, replied with their warmest thanks to Doneraile for his ‘steady zeal and uniform liberality’ in supporting the corps from its establishment.⁸⁶ The club-like nature of the corps may be seen when Lieutenant White also received the corps’ thanks, and was presented with a plate of silver, also known as a salver, valued at twenty guineas.⁸⁷ The plate was inscribed with the thanks of the corps, due to White’s ‘zealous and indefatigable exertions to forward and complete the discipline of the corps’, which suggests that while the Doneraile corps were very much a social organisation, their military duties were not unheeded.⁸⁸ The club-like nature may also be seen in the application process in joining the corps; in 1801 all applicants had to be balloted and voted in by a majority of the members of the corps, following initial approval by the commanding officer.⁸⁹ The method of voting was by beans, with white signifying admittance and black rejection.⁹⁰

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Minutes of meeting of the Doneraile Yeomanry, 16 Apr. 1797 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Minutes of meeting of the Doneraile Yeomanry, 26 Feb. 1797 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁸⁸ Inscription of salver, 2 July 1797 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁸⁹ Minutes of meeting of the Doneraile Yeomanry, 8 Feb. 1801 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁹⁰ Ibid.

In May 1798 Captain Evans resigned his command of the corps, due to ill health and the corps voted unanimously in favour of his eldest son, Nicholas Evans Junior, assuming command.⁹¹ Nicholas Evans Junior commanded the corps until resigning in 1801 and Lieutenant White was recommended to government for the command of the Doneraile Cavalry.⁹² From their involvement in both the Doneraile Rangers and the Doneraile Yeomanry, it is evident that the Doneraile family dominated local affairs in the 1780s and 1790s, as the Protestant Ascendancy dominated political, social and military affairs across all of Ireland. The experiences of the Doneraile Yeomanry illustrate how the novelty of military service attracted local loyalists. More prestige was associated with the yeomanry than the militia, as evidenced by the club-like procedures for joining the unit and their freedom to choose their own uniforms. As a mostly Protestant Ascendancy formation that served in their own localities, there was a strong social aspect to the yeomanry that was not associated with the Irish militia. However, Catholic yeomen also served, and the formation of Catholic yeomanry corps involved a much more political dimension which will be discussed presently.

THE YEOMANRY BEFORE AND DURING 1798

The role of Catholics in the yeomanry

While the Irish yeomanry, especially in later years, came to represent the Protestant population of Ireland, it did not generally exclude Catholics from its ranks. In 1797 there were between 2000 and 3000 Catholic yeomen in Ireland.⁹³ The total number of yeomen in

⁹¹ Evans to the gentlemen of the Doneraile Yeomanry, 13 May 1798 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁹² Minutes of meeting of the Doneraile Yeomanry, 1 Feb. 1801 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 12155).

⁹³ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 132.

1798 was recorded as 36000 men, illustrating the dominance of the Protestant element.⁹⁴

However, the minority of Catholics made an important symbolic gesture of loyalty to the crown.

Some important Catholics served as officers in the yeomanry. For example, Arthur James Plunkett, Earl of Fingall, of the Catholic Plunkett family of Killeen Castle, County Meath, commanded the Skreen Cavalry Yeomanry and had previously been lieutenant-colonel of the Royal Meath Militia.⁹⁵ The Skreen Cavalry were a mostly Catholic yeomanry corps, like their commander, and took part in the suppression of the 1798 rebellion. Lord Fingall was an Irish Liberal who was at the forefront of the campaign for Catholic relief in the 1790s, due to his rare position as both a Catholic and a member of the gentry, and therefore an important figure in Irish politics and society.⁹⁶ He also acted as one of the lay trustees of St. Patrick's Catholic seminary, established in Maynooth in 1795.⁹⁷ Fingall later chaired the Catholic Committee and brought petitions to London for further abolition of the penal laws.⁹⁸ Fingall was described as a 'zealous and faithful subject of the Crown' who represented the plight of ordinary Catholics and was 'ambitious of being employed by government as the channel of communication with the Catholic body.'⁹⁹ This loyalty was further augmented by his involvement in both the militia and yeomanry.

⁹⁴ History of the yeomanry, Yeomanry Office, 31 Oct 1801 (T.N.A., Public Record Office (P.R.O.), 30/9/124/227)

⁹⁵ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p.134; Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p.65.

⁹⁶ Arthur James Plunkett, 8th Earl of Fingall (1759-1836), *The complete peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom* (London, 13 vols, 1916), v, 324-5.

⁹⁷ 'Arthur James Plunkett, 8th Earl of Fingall (1759-1836)' Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (2 July 2013).

⁹⁸ 'Arthur James Plunkett, 8th Earl of Fingall (1759-1836)' Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (2 July 2013). Plunkett was made a Knight of St. Patrick in 1821, the first Catholic to join the order.

⁹⁹ Notes as to Irish Catholics, 1806 (N.L.I., Richmond Papers, Ms 60/264/1)

Another member of the remaining Catholic gentry was Jenico Preston, who raised and commanded the Gormanston Yeomanry in 1796.¹⁰⁰ The Preston family had been the bearers of the title Viscount Gormanston until the 6th and 7th Viscount were outlawed due to their support of James II in the 1690s. The Preston family had managed to retain their land and in 1800, Jenico was restored to the title, and campaigned alongside Fingall for Catholic Emancipation.¹⁰¹ Like Fingall, Gormanston was described as a ‘good subject’ and ‘ready to cooperate with government.’¹⁰² For those who sought relief for Catholics, serving in the yeomanry was an opportunity for gaining the faith and trust of the authorities by loyal service

The Loyal Cork Legion was mostly composed of wealthy Catholics of the middle and upper classes while the Cork Volunteers (a yeomanry corps rather than an older-style Irish Volunteer corps) were predominantly Protestant.¹⁰³ It seems that wealthy, respectable Catholics were welcome within the yeomanry, reflecting the distinction between the acceptable Roman Catholic and the untrustworthy ‘Papist’, suggesting that the Irish Ascendancy identity was founded more on economic than religious distinctions.¹⁰⁴ Yet, religion had been the basis for mistrust in the militia and for sending the Irish Brigade to foreign domains. This discrepancy suggests that religion was often used to frame social prejudices and power struggles in Irish society that in fact had more to do with status, wealth and control than religious beliefs.

During the 1798 rebellion, Catholic yeomen proved their worth in battle. On 26 May, two days after the rebellion broke out, a large number of rebels assembled at the Hill of Tara in County Meath and sent a challenge to Fingall, as local landlord, daring him to

¹⁰⁰ *London Gazette*, 19 Nov. 1796; Sonja Tiernan, ‘“A zealous Catholic and notorious trouble-maker”: the Gormanston Papers in the National Library of Ireland’ in *Riocht na Midhe*, xx (2009), pp 171-88, at p. 180.

¹⁰¹ Jenico Preston, (1775–1860) 12th Viscount Gormanstown, *The complete peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom* (London, 13 vols, 1921), v, 475.

¹⁰² Notes as to Irish Catholics, 1806 (N.L.I., Richmond Papers, Ms 60/264/2)

¹⁰³ Tobias George Smollett, *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature* xxxvi (London, 1802), 184.

¹⁰⁴ Hill, ‘National festivals, the state and ‘Protestant Ascendancy’’, p. 38.

attack.¹⁰⁵ As the ancient capital of Celtic Ireland, Tara carried a strong symbolism for the rebels. For Fingall's 'noted loyalty and zeal in the service of his king and country,' Richard Musgrave claimed that the rebels had planned to assassinate him as a signal to massacre all loyalists in Meath.¹⁰⁶ The government troops sent to deal with the rebels at Tara consisted of a detachment of the Scottish Reay Fencibles and three corps of local yeomanry from Navan, Kells and Skreen. Government forces only lost thirteen men at this battle, while the rebels lost around 350, indicating the effectiveness of trained musket fire against irregular troops armed mostly with cumbersome pikes.¹⁰⁷ Fingall commanded his Skreen corps during this battle, and he 'and his Catholic yeomanry bore a distinguished part in this battle.'¹⁰⁸ His mostly Catholic corps would have faced off against fellow Catholics from the locality, yet they performed well. It was even claimed that he sought quarter for captured rebels after the battle.¹⁰⁹ A month later a Captain Dillon wrote to Fingall, informing him that Killeen Castle still stood and that the men of the corps were in 'high spirits,' and attached a list of arms taken from the rebels, consisting mostly of pikes and scythes.¹¹⁰ Unit morale was essential for a unit to operate effectively and the Skreen corps evidently benefitted from good leadership, much like the Donegal Militia.

The conduct of Fingall illustrates that loyalism, although strongly associated with the Protestant population, was not the sole preserve of the Ascendancy. In fact, during and after the rebellion, there were many displays of loyalism by both Catholic and Protestant Irishmen. In addition to those who fought against the rebels, many Catholic lords such as Fingall and Gormanstown, bishops and other high-ranking Catholics, including Daniel

¹⁰⁵ Pakenham, *The year of liberty*, p. 181.

¹⁰⁶ Richard Musgrave, *Memoirs of the different rebellions in Ireland* (Dublin, 3rd ed, 2 vols, 1802), i, 368. It must be remembered however, that Musgrave was a staunch loyalist, writing shortly after the rebellion, and subject to significant bias against the rebels and Catholics in general.

¹⁰⁷ Pakenham, *The year of liberty*, p. 183.

¹⁰⁸ W. E. Lecky, *A history of England in the eighteenth century* (8 vols, London, 1890), viii, 67.

¹⁰⁹ William Wellesley Pole, *Substance of the speech of the Rt. Hon. William Wellesley Pole, in the House of Commons, 8 March 1811, relative to the conduct of the Irish government* (London, 1811), p. 30.

¹¹⁰ Dillon to Fingall, 4 June 1798 (N.L.I., Fingall Papers, MS 8029).

O'Connell, signed a declaration condemning the rebellion in June 1798.¹¹¹ Conversely, most of the leaders of the rebellion, including Wolfe Tone, were Protestants. These examples illustrate how religion was not a characteristic strictly associated with either supporters, or opponents of government. Loyalty was the key characteristic, more important than an individual's beliefs.

The yeomanry as a peace-keeping force

One of the roles the yeomanry found itself in was that of a police force, as Ireland, like many countries, was not in possession of a formal one at this time. However, the army was not always best suited for policing a civilian population; in Britain, the army had shot dead around 285 people at the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots in 1780.¹¹² Town councils, both in Britain and Ireland, employed watchmen to guard against disturbances but these men lacked training, set regulations and any ability to combat large-scale disaffection.¹¹³ For the yeomanry, policing involved combatting not only secret societies such as the Defenders and United Irishmen, but also local-level crime and banditry. This role would become a very important one for the yeomanry, as they were not rotated around Ireland like the militia.

Despite their role in policing, the Irish yeomanry were not all upstanding members of the community themselves. The Chief Constable for Kells, County Meath, a Mr. P. Shiels, wrote to Pelham in late October 1796, reporting that a number of robberies had taken place in Kells and that a yeomanry corps was forming as a result, with a clear emphasis on police duties rather than counter-insurgency role.¹¹⁴ However, Shiels warned that some of the men enlisting in the Kells corps were in fact 'great offenders in the county' rather than the 'respectable farmers' that W. C. Lindsay had envisaged earlier that year.¹¹⁵ The example of

¹¹¹ *London Gazette*, 1 June 1798.

¹¹² Herlihy, *The Royal Irish Constabulary*, p. 26.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹¹⁴ Shiels to Pelham, 30 Oct. 1796 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1015/31).

¹¹⁵ Shiels to Pelham, 30 Oct. 1796 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1015/31); Lindsay to Pelham, 28 Jan. 1796 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1015/3).

the Kells yeomanry demonstrates the inherent problem of amateur auxiliary forces; armed men, without adequate training and discipline, were almost as destabilising a factor in society as revolutionaries.

The Irish yeomanry was an amateur formation but some yeomen did possess military experience. By April 1797 Lindsay was a captain of Fort Edward Yeomanry Cavalry in Tyrone.¹¹⁶ Lindsay was a veteran of the American Revolution, where he was wounded in action, and his military experience may be contrasted with the lack of professional military experience of either Viscounts Doneraile.¹¹⁷ Lindsay wrote to Pelham in 1797, warning that he suspected insurrection before long, and had therefore stockpiled his corps' weapons together under guard.¹¹⁸ The United Irishmen were seeking to equip their members for a revolution, and the dispersed nature of the yeomanry made them a target for arms robberies.¹¹⁹ The behaviour of Captain Lindsay is an example of the siege mentality of the Ascendancy identity in Ireland, where they perceived themselves surrounded by enemies and armed vigilance was the only solution. The location of the corps was also significant, as Fort Edward is located near Dungannon, the traditional home of the Volunteer movement and therefore closely linked with the Protestant tradition of self-defence.

By paying the yeomen out of government funds the authorities were able to exert more influence over the yeomanry than the old Volunteers but this came at a high financial cost, especially while the government was under severe strains to equip the militia, fencibles and regulars on the Irish Establishment.¹²⁰ In April 1797, Lindsay urgently requested that his yeomanry corps 'be put immediately on constant pay and under military regulations' or that more troops be sent into the county, illustrating the increasing instability of Ireland.¹²¹ Lack of equipment was a common problem; Captain Anthony McReynolds of the Clonoe

¹¹⁶ Lindsay to Pelham, 4 Apr. 1797 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1016/44).

¹¹⁷ Sylvanus Urban, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (April, 1800) p. 382.

¹¹⁸ Lindsay to Pelham, 4 Apr. 1797 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1016/44).

¹¹⁹ Blackstock, *An Ascendancy army*, p. 112.

¹²⁰ John King to the Commissioners of Transport, 20 Apr. 1795 (N.L.I., K.P., 1003/57).

¹²¹ Lindsay to Pelham, 22 Apr. 1797 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1016/45).

Yeomanry Infantry complained that his County Tyrone corps had twelve unserviceable guns and only three rounds of ammunition per man, not an ideal situation when faced with increasing disaffection and disturbances.¹²²

The localised and dispersed nature of the yeomanry meant that it offered the most tempting target for arms robberies, by the United Irishmen and other disaffected groups. Lindsay reported the theft of arms from some of his yeomen in April.¹²³ In County Wexford, Arthur Annesley, 1st Earl of Mountnorris and 9th Viscount Valentia, commanded the Camolin Cavalry corps, and in October he reported to William Elliot, military under-secretary, a robbery of gunpowder and requested that more troops be sent to his area, preferably cavalry over infantry.¹²⁴ This indicates that the yeomanry alone were not always adequate to the task of internal security and peace-keeping, and the need for coordination between the various formations on the Irish Establishment may be seen. The Camolin yeomanry would see much action in the coming rebellion, as County Wexford would witness the majority of the fighting and sectarian violence in 1798.

Some military commanders were reluctant to assign their troops policing duties, which took them away from their military duties. Sir Ralph Abercromby, Commander-in-Chief of the forces in Ireland, wrote to the Duke of York in early 1798, stating, 'I have endeavoured as far as possible to resist the interference of the troops in all matters where the Civil Magistrates ought to have interposed.'¹²⁵ He warned that in the event of an invasion, the militia and regulars would be called to deal with the invaders while the gentlemen of the Ascendancy would have to lead the yeomanry 'in whom they must ultimately rely for their

¹²² Lindsay to Pelham, 22 Apr. 1797 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1016/45); McReynolds to Pelham, Aug. 1797 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1016/47).

¹²³ Lindsay to Pelham, 4 Apr. 1797 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1016/44).

¹²⁴ Arthur Annesley (1744-1816), *The complete peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom* (London, 13 vols, 1959), xii, 209; Mountnorris to Elliot, 5 Oct. 1797 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1016/50a).

¹²⁵ Copy of a letter from Sir Ralph Abercromby to the Duke of York, Dublin 17 Feb 1798 (N.L.I., Melville Papers, Ms 54A/12).

internal security,' against any insurrection.¹²⁶

The yeomanry as a military force

The yeomanry was not expected to act alone, but rather as part of the larger military strategy for security. In late 1797 Abercromby wrote to William Elliot regarding a request for military aid in Fethard, County Tipperary and Brigadier General Sir Charles Asgill was ordered to help the magistrates of the area in order to preserve the peace and the local yeomanry were ordered to assist the general.¹²⁷ An advantage of the Irish yeomanry was its local knowledge, which the general's forces, being a mix of regulars and militia, lacked. Reciprocally, the opportunity to serve under officers such as Asgill, a veteran of both the American war and the Flanders campaign, would have greatly benefitted the yeomanry.¹²⁸ This co-operation would be of great importance during the coming insurrection, where urgency forced units from different formations to act together against large numbers of rebels.

As rebellion loomed the main yeomanry force many corps were augmented with what were termed 'supplementary yeomen,' who served without pay or even uniforms. This was again another quick solution adopted by the Irish government to augment the troops already serving on the Establishment. The yeomen, both regular and supplementary, and militia were criticised by army officers for their harsh reprisals against suspected rebels and rebel sympathisers.¹²⁹ Sir John Moore, who would go on to command the British army in the Peninsula, observed that order would have been restored much sooner 'had it not been for the violence and atrocity of the yeomen.'¹³⁰ Moore was of the opinion that the behaviour of the yeoman caused a loss of faith in the government, and the regular troops and fencibles that were hurriedly shipped to Ireland would be best put to use watching over the yeomanry, and

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Abercromby to Elliot, 22 Dec. 1797 (N.L.I., K.P., 1014/82).

¹²⁸ Sir Charles Asgill (1763-1823), Dictionary of National Biography (40 vols, Oxford, 2004), ii, 597.

¹²⁹ Reid, *Armies of the Irish Rebellion*, p. 18.

¹³⁰ *The Diary of Sir John Moore*, ed. J.F Maurice (2 vols, London, 1904), i, 311.

making sure they and the loyalist Protestants restrained themselves.¹³¹ This was the almost inevitable result of the rapid augmentation of the armed forces in Ireland, and the government's decision to arm one part of the population against the other, with little training and variable leadership.

In the years preceding the rebellion the United Irishmen had planned to infiltrate the militia and yeomanry, in order to rapidly amass a force of trained troops. This infiltration was not as successful as hoped, as discussed in Chapter 4. The yeomanry, despite being regarded as a staunchly loyalist force, experienced similar levels of desertion and defection to those of the militia. Two of the rebel commanders at the Battle of Oulart Hill in 1798 were ex-yeomen and still wore their scarlet jackets.¹³² In Cork a captain of the Westmeath militia was court-martialled for making treasonable toasts and plotting sedition with a sergeant of the Cloyne Yeomanry.¹³³ A painting of the battle of Vinegar Hill depicts a rebel yeoman, still in uniform, being cut down by the 5th Dragoons (see Fig. 4.1).



Figure 4.1: 'Vinegar Hill, charge of the 5th Dragoons' 21 June 1798, by William Sadler (1880)

(National Library of Ireland, Dublin)

The resolve of the yeomanry was not always guaranteed, as experienced by Maxwell of the Donegal Militia; two of the deserting corps under his command at Wexford had been

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, i 311.

¹³² Pakenham, *The year of liberty*, p. 174.

¹³³ Proceedings of a court-martial, Loyal Cork Legion Order Book, 25 Nov 1798 (N.L.I., MS 16854).

yeomanry.¹³⁴ Similarly, a mixture of surprise and lack of training amongst the government troops at Oulart Hill resulted in the force of militia and yeomanry being virtually destroyed by the rebels.¹³⁵ The rebellion was not confined to the Catholic lower classes either; Cornelius Grogan, who had commanded a corps of Volunteers in 1782, joined the United Irishmen when they attacked Wexford in 1798. Grogan was a member of the Ascendancy and lived at Johnstown Castle in County Wexford, and had been a supporter of Catholic relief and of Earl Fitzwilliam, but had still been considered loyal, having offered to raise a yeomanry corps in Forth, as described previously.¹³⁶ It was claimed that his age and infirmity led the rebels to coerce him into joining them, as it would have given credibility to their cause.¹³⁷ He was elected commissary general of the rebel forces but when Wexford was recaptured he was court-martialled, found guilty of treason and hanged on Wexford Bridge, alongside the other rebel leaders.¹³⁸ Grogan's two brothers commanded yeomanry corps in Wexford, his brother Thomas was killed leading a charge of his cavalry at Arklow, County Wicklow.¹³⁹

However, other yeomanry units performed well during the rebellion, their local knowledge proving useful to government forces. The yeomanry was also used for garrison duties; in Limerick in late May General Sir James Duff, left the county in the care of the yeomanry, allowing him to march with a relief column of militia and dragoons to Kildare.¹⁴⁰ On 1 June a force of yeomanry, including the Gorey Infantry and Cavalry, the Camolin Cavalry and Ballaghkeen Cavalry, along with two militia detachments, successfully defeated a large body of rebels near the town of Gorey, County Wexford.¹⁴¹ The advantages of the yeomanry cavalry demonstrated itself in the following pursuit, with the yeomen running

¹³⁴ Nelson, *Irish militia*, p. 190.

¹³⁵ Pakenham, *The year of liberty*, pp 174-6.

¹³⁶ Pakenham, *The year of liberty*, p. 215; Pelham to Grogan, 5 Dec. 1796 (N.L.I., Grogan Papers, MS 11093).

¹³⁷ Gordon, *History of the rebellion in Ireland*, pp 394-5.

¹³⁸ H. F. B. Wheeler and A. M. Broadley, *The war in Wexford* (London, 1910), p. 221.

¹³⁹ Gordon, *History of the rebellion in Ireland*, p. 395.

¹⁴⁰ Pakenham, *The year of liberty*, p. 185.

¹⁴¹ Wheeler and Broadley, *The war in Wexford*, p. 105.

down large numbers of rebels, something that the infantry corps, and exclusively-infantry militia, would have found much more difficult.

The defensive motivations of the yeomanry may be seen in their actions at the battle of Newtownbarry, modern-day Bunclody, County Wexford. Also on 1 June the town was attacked by rebels and the garrison was forced to retreat from the town. However, the local yeomanry refused to retreat further, and the government force rallied and successfully retook Newtownbarry, with the aid of loyalists in the town who fired upon the enemy.¹⁴² The yeomanry had been raised for the internal defence of Ireland, and evidently did not wish to abandon their neighbours and properties to the rebels. The historian George Taylor described the yeomen as the ‘military saviours of their country,’ sentiments that illustrate the strong loyalist identity that the yeomanry had cultivated.¹⁴³ He also declared them to be ‘the bulwark of the Irish nation,’ demonstrating the close association of the yeomanry with the Protestant defence tradition and a strong national identity.¹⁴⁴ In July Major General Wemyss thanked the yeomanry of Drogheda and locals for acting as guides for his forces in Louth and Meath, which included many Scottish fencibles who had been unfamiliar with the countryside.¹⁴⁵

THE YEOMANRY AFTER 1798: GUARDING IRELAND FROM THE IRISH

Wemyss use of the phrase ‘gentlemen yeomanry’ to describe the Drogheda yeomanry contrasts with the unsavoury reputation the yeomanry as a whole developed in the wake of the rebellion.¹⁴⁶ A collection of seven affidavits from 1799 described outrages committed by

¹⁴² George Taylor, *A history of the rise, progress and suppression of the rebellion in the county of Wexford in the year 1798* (Dublin, 1829), p. 46.

¹⁴³ Taylor, *The rebellion in the county of Wexford*, p. 45.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *London Gazette*, 17 July 1798.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

both ‘rebels and yeomanry’ in Wexford.¹⁴⁷ Cornwallis himself famously described the yeomanry as ‘in the style of the Loyalists of America, only much more numerous and a thousand times more ferocious. These men have saved the country, but now take the lead in rapine and murder.’¹⁴⁸ He stated that upon arriving in Ireland he managed to a stop to their outrages, yet the outrages in Wexford in 1799 say otherwise.¹⁴⁹ Although some yeomanry corps acquitted themselves well, this negative overall reputation suggests that the yeomanry did not develop into the dependable, competent force that had been envisioned by the Ascendancy.

Despite this, the continuing danger of insurrection prompted the military authorities to increase the yeomanry corps and create more supplementary yeomanry corps. Sometimes, as evidenced by a letter from Brigadier General Francis Grose to Colonel Edward B. Littlehales, this was accomplished simply by arming the loyalist element of a locality, creating groups similar to the armed associations that existed before the formation of the yeomanry.¹⁵⁰ This step is another example of the British government opting for a quick, but potentially dangerous, solution to Irish instability. Whereas the regulars would have served under army law and the auxiliaries under a form of army law, it is not clear what kind of regulations Grose’s armed loyalists would have served under. Given the threat such armed groups posed to political and civic stability, as evidenced by the Volunteers of 1782, their formation post-1798 seems likely to have been a last resort measure and indicates that while there was now equipment for an armed force, the funds to establish a proper corps were unavailable.

The yeomanry continued to be used for patrolling and guarding, duties more suited to a trained police force than an amateur, paramilitary force, and often in conjunction with

¹⁴⁷ Affidavits sworn before a Gen. Annesly Brownrigg, 1799 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1018/30).

¹⁴⁸ *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, ii, 371.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, iii, 89.

¹⁵⁰ Grose to Littlehales, 30 Dec. 1799 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1018/31).

many other military units. For example, the city of Cork's garrison included two yeomanry corps, the Cork Volunteers and the Loyal Cork legion, who shared the guarding of the city with the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry, three militia regiments (Tyrone, Westmeath and Galway), as well as the 41st Regiment of Foot and the 5th Battalion of the 60th Regiment, also known as the Royal Americans.¹⁵¹ Cornwallis reported to Portland in early 1799 that, despite complaints that the loyal subjects of Ireland were not properly protected, 'a considerable proportion of the yeomanry are kept on permanent duty, at great expense, solely for this purpose.'¹⁵² Captain Isaac Cannock, based at the Ferns Barracks in Wexford, reported in December 1799 that his corps of infantry was encountering almost nightly disturbances, and were 'almost worn off their legs.'¹⁵³ Further into the nineteenth-century, the Royal Irish Constabulary was established as an armed national police force, and may be seen as a continuation of the armed defence tradition of the yeomanry, but exclusively formed and trained for just such a purpose.

Cannock also requested permission from the lord lieutenant to permit 'wealthy and well-disposed' Roman Catholics to arm themselves against sectarian attack.¹⁵⁴ Cannock reported that occasionally, the Catholics had desperately seen off the would-be robbers 'by resistance with even spades and pitchforks.'¹⁵⁵ Interestingly, although the relief acts of 1793 allowed Catholics to bear arms, Cannock was still compelled to request special permission from Cornwallis for the formation of an armed group of Catholics. Furthermore, the 'well-disposed' Catholics were evidently perceived as distinctly different from the ordinary Catholics of the lower classes, indicating again that the difference between the 'ruling' class and the 'ruled' was socioeconomic rather than rigidly religious.

¹⁵¹ General Orders, Loyal Cork Legion Order Book, 9, 16 and 23 Sept. 1798 (N.L.I., MS 16854).

¹⁵² Cornwallis to Portland, 11 Mar. 1799, *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, iii, 73-4.

¹⁵³ Letter of Capt. Cannock, 19 Dec. 1799 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1018/31).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Letter of Capt. Cannock, 19 Dec. 1799 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1018/31).

The close relationship between military and political affairs is again evident in the run-up to the Act of Union. The yeomanry, with their strong Orange connections, were often in favour of the union, as seen in the example of Lindsay, who ‘welcomed’ the union, along with his yeomanry corps.¹⁵⁶ Others (unsuccessfully) called upon the yeomanry to resist the Union, claiming that ‘no Government can wrest the Parliament from 60,000 armed and trained men.’¹⁵⁷ This kind of rhetoric echoes the earlier independent and opposition-minded ethos of the Volunteers. Following the union of the parliaments, Doneraile lost his seat in the Irish House of Lords but received £15,000 in compensation.¹⁵⁸ The captain of the Loyal Cork Legion, John Hely-Hutchinson, was created Earl of Donoughmore and one of the original Irish Peers in the newly unified parliament; likely as a reward for to his support of the union.¹⁵⁹ While a Protestant, Donoughmore was an advocate of Catholic Emancipation, as well as Grandmaster of the Freemasons in Ireland, again illustrating the close links between the yeomanry and the Freemasons, like the links between the Volunteers and Freemasons previously. These are but a few examples of the divided opinions in Ireland over the union. While many objected to the loss of the Irish parliament, such as Lord Downshire of the Downshire Militia, others such as the above saw the personal political opportunities that the union offered.

Like the militia, many in the yeomanry wished to demonstrate their loyalty with offers to serve in Britain as well as Ireland. In August 1801 the Johnstown Rangers Yeomanry Corps of County Wexford declared themselves to be ‘ready and willing’ to march with their captain, and serve in any part of Great Britain or Ireland.¹⁶⁰ Their captain was John Knox Grogan, surviving brother to the executed Cornelius Grogan and the late Thomas Grogan Knox, and he evidently wished to demonstrate his continued loyalty in the wake of

¹⁵⁶ Sylvanus Urban, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (April, 1800) p. 382.

¹⁵⁷ *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, iii, 168.

¹⁵⁸ Hayes St. Leger, 2nd Viscount Doneraile (1755-1819), *The complete peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom* (London, 13 vols, 1916), iv, 397.

¹⁵⁹ ‘John Hely-Hutchinson (1757–1832)’ *Dictionary of Irish Biography Online* (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (2 July 2013).

¹⁶⁰ Resolutions of the Johnstown Rangers, 23 Aug. 1801 (N.L.I., Grogan Papers, Ms 11093).

his brother Cornelius' treason, illustrating how divisive the rebellion had been, even amongst members of the Ascendancy. This offer was not taken up on but the Chief Secretary, Charles Abbot, conveyed the lord lieutenant's satisfaction at the 'loyal and respectable' corps' 'zeal and alacrity' in their service.¹⁶¹

CONCLUSIONS

The yeomanry was conceived as a stabilising force, which would harness the Protestant defence tradition and regulate it, preventing another rise in Volunteerism. The Doneraile Yeomanry can be seen as a success, therefore, as despite a strong Volunteer heritage, they did not become heavily politicised. The yeomanry was highly localised, with a strong loyalist identity, to take advantage of the local interests of the Ascendancy and their loyalist brethren. However, it can be concluded that the scattered and localised nature of the yeomanry made it economically and practically unfeasible as an efficient military force. Compared to the militia, which operated 38 regiments across Ireland, the yeomanry were organized by neighbourhoods, with approximately 879 corps distributed around Ireland by late 1803.¹⁶²

The Irish government, already stretched with supplying the militia and regulars, could not possibly have supplied the yeomanry with sufficient experienced officers to train all the new corps or the necessary arms and equipment to keep all the corps at an operational level. Enthusiastic loyalism was not a substitute for training and discipline and these issues, already evident in communication between yeomanry commanders and military authorities before the rebellion, reached a breaking point during and after 1798. The scattered nature of the force led to a much more variable range of quality, with some corps acquitting themselves well and earning the respect of esteemed veteran officers, while others showed a

¹⁶¹ Abbot to Beavor, 31 Aug. 1801 (N.L.I., Grogan Papers, Ms 11093).

¹⁶² For a full listing, see Appendix 3.

marked lack of discipline and self-control, often leading to brutality, which was sometimes sectarian in nature.

The amateur nature of the formation was another factor in its chequered performance. The power balance between government and the Ascendancy was likely a factor here; while the government wanted a regulated loyalist force, the threat of radicalisation perhaps rendered them reluctant to over-regulate the yeomanry, as this could have alienated the Ascendancy. Therefore, military structure and discipline was eschewed in favour of a club-like organization which did not stand up to the demands of active military service. A study of the Doneraile corps demonstrates that the yeomanry was as much a social unit as a military unit, and the emphasis on family tradition and local politics could overshadow military duties.

Although levels of desertion and defection were similar across the militia and the yeomanry, the yeomanry developed a reputation for brutality and ill-discipline, whereas the militiamen grew to be highly regarded by the authorities. However, post-1798, the authorities continued to raise yeomanry corps as they were an expedient, if not necessarily effective, measure; the yeomanry was established in 1796 at 20,000 men and had increased to 50,000 men by 1801, about half of the Irish Establishment.¹⁶³ Conversely, the militia only stood at about 25,300 in 1801, but their lower numbers are not an indication of government disapproval; it must be remembered that the militia were also sending troops to the regulars at this stage.¹⁶⁴ As previously demonstrated, the militia was not discarded in favour of the yeomanry in the aftermath of 1798. Both formations were augmented and used for the same policing and garrison duties.

As the Irish yeomanry operated more like an elite club than a military unit, a greater understanding of the structure of Irish society in the late eighteenth-century can be gained by

¹⁶³ History of the yeomanry, Yeomanry Office, 31 Oct. 1801 (T.N.A., P.R.O., 30/9/124/227).

¹⁶⁴ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 248.

examining the background of those who commanded, joined or were associated with the yeomanry. The arming of wealthy, loyal, Catholics, such as Lord Fingall and his corps, demonstrates that society was not divided along strict religious lines, as is often portrayed in modern scholarship. Rather, Irish society was a much more complex structure and this may be seen in the various forms of military service that Irishmen participated in during the wars. Loyalty to the crown, which appears closely linked to wealth and status, could surpass religious differences, illustrating again the complex identities of Irish soldiers. While the Irish Brigade, with its exclusively Catholic composition, and the Irish militia, with a large Catholic identity, had encountered opposition from the authorities, the Irish yeomanry did not meet with such high opposition. Professional military commanders still recognised their potential for harsh behaviour but also recognised the potential for a rapidly raised and highly motivated armed defence force. Its close association with Protestantism and loyalism assisted in enhancing its status but as this chapter has demonstrated the Irish yeomanry was neither exclusively Protestant nor completely loyal; some yeomen joined the rebels in 1798 whilst others brutally suppressed them. What the experiences of the Irish yeomanry demonstrates is that the armed loyalist identity was something that the British authorities were willing to enable in order to secure Irish, and therefore British, stability in a time of perceived crisis for Britain. However, this rapid augmentation of the Irish Establishment, by simply arming loyalists in the area affected, had the potential to be severely destabilising in itself; as was the case with the Irish militia, it was the quality of the commanders that determined how the identities of the individual corps developed.

The Protestant defence tradition, once a part of the unpredictable Irish Volunteers, now had an additional avenue for expansion that was controlled by government. The yeomanry became the most popular choice for Ascendancy men who wished to display their loyalty while remaining in their locality and enjoying the prestige and pageantry of military service without the inconvenience of service away from home. There were only a limited

amount of militia regiments but the smaller nature of the yeomanry meant that every township or borough could form a corps if they wanted to.

The Doneraile Yeomanry Corps represented a direct continuation of the Volunteer tradition, with many of the Doneraile Rangers Volunteer Corps joining the new yeomanry corps. Added to this was a desire to continue a family tradition of military service that stretched back to Tudor times. However, the location of Doneraile meant that it did not experience much action in 1798. Indeed, the Doneraile Yeomanry were more interested in the trappings of military life, meticulously debating the terms of joining the corps and the details of the uniforms. This interest in the outward appearance suggests that the senior officers were mostly interested demonstrating not only their loyalty but also their status in society, and the general superior status of the Protestant Ascendancy to the Catholic population, with which the militia was closely associated.

CHAPTER 6

‘NEVER LET THEM FORGET THEY ARE BRITISH AND IRISH SOLDIERS’: THE IRISH FENCIBLES

The previous two chapters have examined the experiences of two types of amateur defence formation in Ireland during the French Revolutionary wars, the Irish militia and the Irish yeomanry. Both of these formations received their commissions from the Lord Lieutenant rather than the Commander-in-Chief of the forces in Ireland, forming a significant delineation between the civilian-led units and the professional army. As has already been demonstrated, the success of such units was strongly influenced by the quality of their individual civilian commanders; the Donegal Militia appears to have benefited from Conyngham’s military experience and Maxwell’s strong leadership skills, while the Doneraile Yeomanry appears lacking in real military leadership, stemming from the officers’ preoccupation with the trappings of military pageantry.

However, there was another sizeable defence formation in Ireland, the fencible regiments, which were raised as part of the regular army, but only for the duration of the war.¹ Fencible officers received their commissions from the Crown, rather than the Lord Lieutenant.² Regular military commanders were said to have preferred the fencibles to militia or yeomanry, Nelson claims due to the ‘perceived weakness of the militia act, and the greater control that the Castle would have had over the fencible officer.’³ Their numbers were smaller than the militia or yeomanry, with just seven fencible regiments raised in Ireland, the rest being Scottish and English units. Given the discipline issues associated with

¹ Fortescue, *History of the British army*, iv, part one, 83.

² McAnally, *The Irish militia*, p. 92.

³ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 252.

the amateur formations, it is somewhat surprising that the defence of the country was mainly left to the militia and yeomanry, when there was a precedent for professional defence formation also. Therefore, this chapter will examine the experiences of the Irishmen serving in the Irish Fencibles, in particular the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry, whose history has not previously been studied in detail, to determine the role that these men played in the defence of Ireland. This regiment, also known as the 2nd Fencible Dragoons, was commanded by Edmond Henry Pery, Lord Glentworth, and was one of only two Irish fencible cavalry regiments raised during the French Revolutionary wars. Particular attention will be given to how their position within the professional army influenced their experiences and whether this had a positive effect on performance and discipline for the regiment, which was extensively rotated around Ireland, patrolling and guarding against internal insurrection and external threats.

As with the other regiments explored in this thesis, the background and motivations of the commanding officers are also a key consideration. Much like the other commanders encountered thus far, raising a regiment was an important demonstration of loyalty to the British government by Lord Glentworth. However, the raising of a cavalry regiment as a time when most of the Irish Establishment consisted of infantry reflected Glentworth's personal ambition as a high-ranking Ascendancy figure in Irish politics in the late eighteenth-century. The wider political and social pressures that affected the corps and its commanding officer are also examined.

ORIGINS OF THE 2ND IRISH FENCIBLE CAVALRY

Fencibles were troops raised in Britain and Ireland during the Seven Years War and the American War of Independence to augment the garrisons of regular troops.⁴ Like the militia,

⁴ Murphy, *The Irish Brigades*, pp 238-9.

the fencibles were embodied to not only for home defence, but to also allow the regular regiments to serve overseas. Their numbers prior to the French Revolutionary wars were quite small relative to the rest of the army, and they did not see any active service in these earlier conflicts.⁵

In 1794, as the war between Britain and Revolutionary France continued, many fencible regiments were again raised for home defence.⁶ Fencible regiments were raised across the British Isles and the English and Scottish fencibles could serve anywhere in the British Isles, including Ireland. Interestingly, Scotland provided many of the fencibles corps, as even several decades after the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, there was an English distrust of a Scottish militia.⁷ Given the preference for fencible regiments in a part of the British Isles that was regarded as relatively stable by this time, it is particularly notable that the fencibles, as a formation, were much lesser used in Ireland. There were very few specifically Irish fencible units raised in the 1790s; most of the military's efforts were focused on the militia and later the yeomanry.

Most of the Irish fencibles corps were infantry, like the militia, and included the Loyal Irish Fencibles, the Loyal Limerick Fencibles, the Ancient Irish Fencible Infantry and the Tarbert Fencibles.⁸ There was also an attempt made in 1797 to raise the Armagh Royal Masonic Fencibles, but this regiment was never formed.⁹ Only two Irish fencibles regiments were designated as cavalry, the 1st and 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry, with the former regiment

⁵ Fortescue, *History of the British army*, iv, part one, 83; Eugene A. Coyle, 'Talbot's Fencibles and the Drogheda mutiny' in *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society*, xxiv, no. 1 (1997), pp 39-50, at p. 39.

⁶ Thomas Bartlett, 'Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion', p. 257.

⁷ Andrew Ross and Ross Herald, 'Review of *An old Highland fencible corps: the history of the Reay Fencible Highland Regiment of Foot, or Mackay's Highlanders, 1794-1802* by I. H. Mackay Scobie and *Territorial soldiering in the North-East of Scotland during 1759-1814* by John Malcolm Bulloch' in *The Celtic Review*, x, no. 38 (1915), pp 175-186, at p. 176.

⁸ Murphy, *The Irish Brigades*, p. 239.

⁹ Alexander Bisset to Thomas Pelham, 2 July 1797 (N.A.I., S.O.C., 1016/5).

setting a template for the formation of the latter; a copy of the offer to raise the 1st Irish Fencible Cavalry is included in the personal papers of Glentworth.¹⁰

The 1st Irish Fencible Cavalry

The 1st Irish Fencible Cavalry was raised by Robert Jocelyn, Lord Jocelyn, an Irish nobleman and M.P. from Dundalk, County Louth, who became the 2nd Earl of Roden following the death of his father in 1797.¹¹ The Jocelyn family were staunch members of the Ascendancy and supporters of the Orange Order; his father had commanded a conservative corps of Volunteers in the 1780s and his son, who succeeded him as the 3rd Earl of Roden, was a strong opponent in parliament of Catholic relief.¹² Robert was considered to be extremely anti-Catholic; demonstrated by his regiment's harsh suppression of the rebels in 1798 and the fact that he was later accused of organising attacks on Catholic houses in Dundalk in 1820.¹³

In July 1794 Jocelyn proposed raising a cavalry corps numbering 160 men.¹⁴ He offered that 'such gentlemen as chooses' were to serve without pay to 'manifest their attachment to the government and constitution of this country,' motivations which would later be shared by the yeomanry.¹⁵ This volunteering may be contrasted to the Irish Volunteers of the 1780s, who also served without pay but did not profess the same level of loyalty to government. An expression of loyalty specifically to the government and constitution also contrasted them favourably with the revolutionaries of France. Officers who declined the opportunity to volunteer, along with the rest of the corps, would be paid and

¹⁰ Proposal of Lord Viscount Jocelyn to raise a corps of light cavalry, 14 July 1794 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16680/5).

¹¹ 'Robert Jocelyn, 2nd Earl of Roden (1721–97)' Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (18 Apr. 2012).

¹² 'Robert Jocelyn, 1st Earl of Roden (1720/1–97)', *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 60 vols, 2004), xxx, 150; Robert Jocelyn, 3rd Earl of Roden (1788–1870), *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 60 vols, 2004), xxx, 150.

¹³ 'Robert Jocelyn, 2nd Earl of Roden (1721–97)' Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (18 Apr. 2012).

¹⁴ Proposal of Lord Viscount Jocelyn to raise a corps of light cavalry, 14 July 1794 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16680/5).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

equipped by government, who would pay no more than fourteen guineas per horse, and all horse were to remain 'at the disposal of government' after the war.¹⁶ Expressing loyalty in this particular manner was a privilege of the wealthy, mostly Protestant upper class, who could afford to serve without pay; as demonstrated in the previous chapter on the Irish yeomanry, for some Ascendancy officers, military life was more of a diversion to them than a livelihood. For Jocelyn, the offer to raise a cavalry regiment, rather than an infantry regiment, would have been a more expensive undertaking and a demonstration of loyalty made possible by his position in society.

The terms on which the 1st Fencible Cavalry were established were economically favourable to government. Yet, as with the Volunteer movement previously, rejecting government's financial support in certain aspects could also potentially distance the formation from government control. The authorities' support of this offer, with its echoes of Volunteerism, suggests either that government was strongly convinced of the loyalty of Jocelyn and his men, or that the economic pressures of the escalating conflict in Europe made the proposal attractive despite the similarities with the problematic Volunteer movement of the previous decade.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE 2ND IRISH FENCIBLE CAVALRY (1794)

Edmond Henry Pery, Lord Glentworth

Shortly afterwards, the 2nd Fencible Cavalry was founded by Edmond Henry Pery, Lord Glentworth, who was a member of the Irish Ascendancy, an M.P. in the Irish House of Parliament, and later a Peer in the House of Lords.¹⁷ The Pery family were a well-established Ascendancy family in Ireland, originally from Brittany, who had risen to prominence during

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ 'Edmond Henry Pery (1758–1845)' Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (17 Apr. 2013).

the reign of Henry VIII.¹⁸ The Pery family were very wealthy and politically active, exerting considerable influence in and around the city of Limerick.¹⁹

Glentworth's father, William Cecil Pery, was the Protestant Bishop of Limerick and 1st Baron Glentworth, and it had been alleged that Pery has bought this peerage in 1789.²⁰ It was claimed that at first George III had not been very willing to grant a peerage to a bishop, but in the end needed the political support.²¹ Glentworth's uncle was the leading Irish politician Edmond Sexton Pery, Speaker of the Irish House of Commons from 1771 to 1785, and a firm supporter of Irish affairs who was responsible for the development and modernisation of Limerick city.²² He was closely associated with the Patriot cause and regarded as one of the most important Irish politicians of the eighteenth-century, earning the admiration of Edmund Burke and Henry Grattan.²³

Glentworth was evidently more similar in political views to his father than his uncle, and was loyal to Britain over Ireland. He was a staunch Tory and loyalist, consistently speaking against Catholic relief.²⁴ He was a member of the Irish Privy Council, the select body of high-ranking Ascendancy gentlemen that advised the Lord Lieutenant.²⁵ He also served as Keeper of the Signet and Privy Seal and Clerk of the Crown and Hanaper in the 1790s, both offices reflecting his position in the closest circles of Ascendancy high society.²⁶ The positions were very much sinecure titles, simply used to reward Glentworth, along with

¹⁸ 'Edmund Sexton Pery (1719-1806)', *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 60 vols, 2004), xliii, 855.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 854-5.

²⁰ William J. Fitzpatrick, "*The Sham Squire*" and the informers of 1798 (3rd ed., Dublin, 1866), p. 40.

²¹ *The later correspondence of George III*, ed. Arthur Aspinall (5 vols, Cambridge, 1963), ii, 263.

²² 'Edmund Sexton Pery (1719-1806)', *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 60 vols, 2004), xliii, 855-8.

²³ 'Edmund Sexton Pery (1719-1806)', *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 60 vols, 2004), xliii, 858; 'Edmond Henry Pery (1758-1845)' *Dictionary of Irish Biography Online* (<http://dib.cambridge.org>), (17 Apr. 2013).

²⁴ 'Edmund Henry Pery (1758-1845)', *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 60 vols, 2004), xliii, 854-5.

²⁵ *London Gazette*, 4 July 1797.

²⁶ Edmund Henry Pery (1758-1844), *The complete peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom* (London, 13 vols, 1929), vii, 663-4.

an annuity (over £132 for the Clerk of the Crown and Hanaper for example).²⁷ Glentworth was described as possessing ‘little talent, and even less tact,’ and despite his position in society he was ‘never widely respected, and was generally regarded as too proud for his own good.’²⁸

Although Glentworth had served as a colonel of a Volunteer regiment in the 1780s, his actual military experience was limited by the fact that the Irish Volunteers never saw active military service.²⁹ In 1793 he was appointed lieutenant-colonel of the Limerick City Militia, under the command of John Prendergast Smyth, 1st Viscount Gort.³⁰ Glentworth’s offer in 1794 to raise a more prestigious fencible cavalry regiment is indicative of his personal ambition, as both his fledgling military career and his established position in the Ascendancy would have benefited from this move. As a time when many of the Ascendancy were striving to demonstrate their loyalty to the crown through military service, it is likely that Glentworth hoped to distinguish himself further by raising a home defence regiment that was a part of the regular army and therefore, superior to the militia.

Glentworth’s offer

The Earl of Westmorland, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, wrote to Glentworth in July 1794, stating that the government was willing to accept Glentworth’s offer, once exact terms had been established. He informed Glentworth that Jocelyn had offered to raise a fencible cavalry regiment ‘on much cheep [sic] terms,’ which Westmorland had accepted, and he advised that if Glentworth offered similar terms, he would be pleased to approve his offer

²⁷ W. H. Maxwell, *History of the Irish rebellion in 1798: with memoirs of the union, and Emmet’s rebellion in 1803* (9th ed., 1871), p. 466.

²⁸ ‘Edmond Henry Pery (1758–1845)’ Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>), (17 Apr. 2013)

²⁹ ‘Edmond Henry Pery (1758–1845)’ Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>), (17 Apr. 2013); John Ferrar, *The history of Limerick, ecclesiastical, civil and military* (Limerick, 1788), p. 145.

³⁰ Kieran Kennedy, ‘The Limerick City Militia 1798’ in the *Old Limerick Journal*, xxxv (1998), pp 16-9, at p. 16.

also.³¹ Edward Cooke, military under-secretary at Dublin Castle, reiterated this in August, informing him that Westmorland would approve Glentworth's terms if they were 'made favourable in a pecuniary view.'³² Jocelyn's financially attractive offer had set a precedent that Glentworth was evidently expected to follow, underlining once more the economic pressures faced by the authorities in Ireland during the war.

On 9 August *Finn's Leinster Journal* reported that the Lord Lieutenant had accepted Lord Glentworth's offer 'to raise a regiment of fencible cavalry for the internal defence of the country.'³³ Glentworth's commission was signed by George III, appointing him lieutenant-colonel commandant of the regiment.³⁴ The Duke of Portland, as Home Secretary, informed Glentworth that he was to rank as a lieutenant-colonel commandant only during the regiment's existence.³⁵ The following year Glentworth received another commission appointing him to the rank of full colonel.³⁶

Similar to the Doneraile Yeomanry, Glentworth's appointment of officers for his regiment reflects the culture of nepotism and patronage in Ireland at this time. A return of officers in 1797 listed a William Thomas Monsell as lieutenant-colonel, and included John Monsell and John Hunt as captains.³⁷ The Monsell and Hunt families were distinguished members of the Ascendancy in Limerick, Glentworth's sister, Ellen, was married to Sir Vere Hunt, a noted military officer whose commands over the course of the wars included the County of Limerick Fencibles.³⁸ John Hunt was likely the brother of Sir Vere Hunt. William Monsell had some military experience, having previously served as captain of the True Blue

³¹ Earl Westmorland to Lord Glentworth, 28 July 1794 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 41680/5).

³² Cooke to Glentworth, 2 Aug. 1794 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 41680/5).

³³ *Finn's Leinster Journal*, 9 Aug. 1794.

³⁴ Portland to Glentworth, 4 Aug. 1794 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 41680/5).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Portland to Glentworth, 18 July 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 41680/5).

³⁷ Weekly return of 2nd Fencible Regt of Dragoons, 15 July 1797 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16680/5).

³⁸ R. G. Thorne, *The House of Commons, 1790-1820* (London, 6 vols, 1986), ii, 667; John Burke, *A genealogical and heraldic dictionary of the landed gentry of Great Britain and Ireland* (3rd ed., 2 vols, London, 1832), i, 351-2.

Foot and Cavalry Volunteers, but the actual practical experience of Volunteer service may be debateable.³⁹ Monsell's father had married Glentworth's aunt, Dymphna Pery.⁴⁰

As Glentworth was from Limerick city, the recruits would initially be drawn from that area. As a cavalry regiment the men would have been expected to supply their own horses or at least know how to ride, and as such, recruitment for the fencible cavalry would be from a wealthier stratum of Irish society than recruitment for the more ubiquitous militia regiments. As such, the fencible cavalry was more likely to become a regiment of Ascendancy peers and middle to upper-class allies, much like the yeomanry that was to come. This wealthier composition, along with the fencibles closer association with the regular army, led to the perception of superiority over the militia, and was likely a reason why Glentworth offered to raise a fencible cavalry regiment rather than a regiment of infantry militia. Yet, in November 1794 the rank of fencibles and militia officers was determined as equal, with the date of their commissions determining seniority.⁴¹

Glentworth was opposed to Catholic Relief but there is no evidence to indicate he excluded Catholics from his regiment. The economic background required to enlist in the fencibles would have precluded Catholics of lesser means from joining, so it is likely that the regiment was mostly Protestant, although as illustrated in the previous chapter on the yeomanry, wealthier Catholics could be included in higher levels of Irish society, although the Ascendancy still dominated.

³⁹ Kieran Kennedy, 'Limerick Volunteers, 1776-1793' in the *Old Limerick Journal*, xxxvi (1999), pp 21-6, at p. 26.

⁴⁰ Matthew Potter, *William Monsell of Tervoe 1812-1894: Catholic Unionist, Anglo-Irishman* (Dublin, 2009), p. 8.

⁴¹ Hewett to Officer commanding Donegal Militia, 9 Nov. 1794 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/221).

Regimental pride in the 2nd Fencibles

In late 1794, the 2nd Fencible Cavalry were deployed to Carlow town, County Carlow.⁴² There, they shared the garrison with the men of the Westmeath Militia.⁴³ Glentworth and his senior officers set about organizing the men into a properly dressed, equipped and disciplined regiment, yet this proved a far from easy task.

The regiment was ordered to have three field days of exercise and training per week, weather permitting, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.⁴⁴ The regiment was to parade by troops for inspection by their officers and then the officer commanding, before marching out of the barracks with their respective officers.⁴⁵ On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, the Riding Master was to perform riding drills with the separate troops and afterwards the men were to study the drill manuals, suggesting that some of the men may not have had much, if any military riding experience before joining the regiment.⁴⁶ Even experienced riders would not have had experience of riding in formation. The Lord Lieutenant approved the hiring of a nearby field for exercising the troops, at a cost of twenty –five guineas per annum, an example of how the arrival of a regiment in an area would benefit the local economy.⁴⁷ With training on every day of the week, apart from Sunday, Glentworth was evidently wished to have a properly trained body of men as soon as possible.

The appearance of the regiment was of great importance to Glentworth and his senior officers, just as it had been with Conyngham and his militiamen, or Doneraile and his

⁴² 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry Regimental Order Book, 27 Dec. 1794 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁴³ The main sources for the 2nd Fencible Cavalry are the numerous regimental orders books, held as part of the Limerick Papers collection at the National Library of Ireland (N.L.I., MSS 16074-81). These books, written by the regimental adjutant, record the daily duties and orders pertaining to the regiment from 1794 to 1800, six years of highly detailed material in eight volumes.

⁴⁴ Regimental order, 25 Feb. 1795, 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry Order Book (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁴⁵ Regimental order, 25 Feb. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁴⁶ Regimental order, 25 Feb. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁴⁷ Handfield to officer commanding Carlow garrison, 10 Mar. 1795 (N.L.I., MS 16074).

yeomen, as any faults in dress could be seen as reflecting a disregard for the regiment and its commander, and were therefore detrimental to a commander's reputation. The appearance of some of the men drew sharp criticism from Glentworth, who described them as 'shameful and dirty' whilst in Carlow town in January 1795.⁴⁸ Glentworth ordered that any man found improperly dressed was to be confined and tried for disobedience of orders.⁴⁹ The officers were expected to hold themselves to a similar standard. Even when in quarters, all officers were ordered to be dressed in their uniforms.⁵⁰ The officers were also to attend morning parade regularly.⁵¹ Glentworth evidently wished to have the best turned out regiment, possibly in competition with the Westmeath Militia that shared the garrison with them.

The appearance of the regiment was again the issue when Corporal Halpin was reduced suspended for one week for bringing one of his men to parade with dirty weapons.⁵² The importance of dress and appearance caused Corporal Rawly to be reduced to the ranks for being 'improperly dressed' in the streets of Carlow, despite the strict orders issued in January by Lord Glentworth.⁵³ Evidently the men were not coming up to Glentworth's high standards, which would have been highly problematic for Glentworth as the commanders of auxiliary regiments saw their regiments as reflections on their own standing in society.

In late April 1795 the 2nd Fencible Cavalry were relocated to Kells, County Meath and nearby Cootehill, County Cavan.⁵⁴ In order to display the regiment in the best possible manner, the officers were ordered to wear their helmets and service swords while on the march in their new location. A General Review by the commander of the district, Major General Eustace, would take place in September, marking the regiment's first year in operation, and Glentworth and his officers worked towards this review, determined to make

⁴⁸ Regimental order, 23 Jan. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Regimental order, 25 Feb. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁵¹ Regimental order, 25 Jan. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁵² Regimental order, 18 Mar. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁵³ Regimental order, 7 Apr. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁵⁴ Regimental order, 26 Apr. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

sure the regiment proved itself worth the cost of maintaining it. Cavalry were a considerable investment; an estimate by the Quarter-Master General's office of the cost of forage from January to June 1793 for the 7th Dragoon Guards alone came to £950.⁵⁵ Furthermore, rations for horses in all cavalry regiments had recently been reduced, illustrating the financial burden that the government was under in maintaining cavalry regiments, and consequently, the importance to Glentworth of proving his regiment's worth.⁵⁶ However, the importance of cavalry regiments in British and Irish military strategy is also evident, as regulations for sourcing cavalry horses were relaxed in order to maintain numbers.⁵⁷

Ceremonial duties were another expression of regimental pride; the Kells garrison were ordered to parade on 4 June for the king's birthday, in full dress with the white side of their cloaks facing out.⁵⁸ The quartermaster was charged with making sure the cloaks were the exact length required, indicating that the commanding officers were still very much interested in presenting as professional an appearance as possible. These ceremonial duties not only increased the regimental pride, but it was also a demonstration of the regiment's loyalty to the king, and by extension His government.

Duties of the 2nd Fencibles

The 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry were put to use patrolling and guarding the localities they were rotated around, similar to the militia. The reason for their rotation was twofold; the men did not become too complacent in their duties in any one place, and also were not able to form attachments with the locals, which could lead to an erosion of discipline. As a cavalry regiment, the 2nd Fencibles were especially suited to policing. They were able to cover more

⁵⁵ Estimate of forage costs, 7th Dragoon Guards, 1793 (N.L.I., K.P., MS 1012/16-18).

⁵⁶ Hewett to officer commanding 2nd Fencible Cavalry, 11 Apr. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁵⁷ General Order to cavalry colonels, 21 Feb. 1795 (N.L.I., K.P., MS 1003/95); General Order to officer commanding 2nd Fencible Cavalry, 21 July 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁵⁸ Garrison orders, 3 June 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

ground more efficiently than an infantry regiment, and the sight of armed, mounted men was also visually striking.

Daily duties in Carlow included guard duty for both the barracks and stables, as well as the town itself. Like other regiments, the 2nd Fencibles were called upon to escort prisoners from time to time, ranging from common criminals to deserters from the armed forces.⁵⁹ The men were paid extra for escort duty, and the sight of the cavalry regiment escorting a deserter would have acted as deterrent to other would-be deserters. As seen in Chapter 4, desertion was a problem for all regiments on the Irish Establishment, as some men struggled to adjust to military life.

In Kells, the regiment were ordered to parade at 10 o'clock, on foot, every morning.⁶⁰ The daily guard duty in Kells involved three guard details, one at the stables, one regimental guard and one on piquet duty. Usually these guard details consisted of one corporal and between four to six privates.⁶¹ Guard details were also sent to various points around the county.⁶² This was in line with the regiment's main duty of maintaining a law and order presence in the locality.

Two weeks after arriving in Kells, the regiment was ordered to attend a field day on 12 May, where they could train together and practice manoeuvres on horseback.⁶³ Another field day was organised for 14 May, and another still later that week.⁶⁴ The personal papers of Lord Glentworth, the Limerick Papers, include several sheets of cavalry drill instructions which indicate the kind of training the men would have undergone.⁶⁵ Manoeuvres included marching in column, closing and opening ranks, wheeling to the flank, subdividing and

⁵⁹ After orders, 31 Jan. 1794 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074); Regimental order, 10 Mar. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074); After orders, 30 Mar. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁶⁰ Regimental order, 4 May 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁶¹ Regimental order, 6 May 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁶² Regimental orders, 14, 19 and 21 June 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁶³ Regimental orders, 11 May 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁶⁴ Regimental orders, 13 May 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁶⁵ Cavalry manoeuvre drill cards (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 41680/5).

reforming and charging with sabres drawn followed by retreat and finally a general salute. The need for cohesive training increased as the threat posed by a possible enemy attack increased; in May the regiment was ordered 'to prepare to take the field on the shortest notice.'⁶⁶ At another field day a week later on 21 May, the men were issued with ten blank cartridges each, further emphasising the need for training to be as realistic as possible in preparation for the expected French landing.⁶⁷

Whilst there is no mention of desertion amongst the 2nd Fencibles, it may be reasoned that they experienced a certain amount of desertion, like the other regiments in the country. Numbers in the regiment needed to be maintained, and even increased, while combatting desertion, making recruitment vital to the success of the regiment. In July 1795 a party of men under the command of Major Monsell were ordered to return to Limerick to begin recruiting for the regiment.⁶⁸ They would have been competing with regular regiments such as the 134th (Loyal Limerick) Regiment of Foot, two militia regiments, the Limerick City and County of Limerick, and Sir Vere Hunt's Limerick Fencibles, for potential new recruits.⁶⁹ The commanders ordered that the men were to wear their cross belts and swords, in order to present the best appearance of the regiment to potential recruits. This aspect of regimental pride not only helped discipline within the regiment, but would have also attracted men to the regiment. The increasing demand for horses was mirrored by an increase in demand for men, for both garrison duty at home and overseas service.

Discipline problems

As the men made the change from civilian to military life, it was inevitable that problems with discipline would arise. It appears that Glentworth and his officers took a strict approach to discipline. Punishments included demotions, reductions in pay and confinement. A man

⁶⁶ Hewett to Officer commanding 2nd Fencibles, 12 May 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁶⁷ Regimental orders, 20 May 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁶⁸ Regimental orders, 31 July 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁶⁹ Murphy, *The Irish Brigades*, p. 106; Nelson, *The Irish militia*, p. 46; Burke, *A genealogical and heraldic dictionary*, i, 351-2.

could only be confined to the Black Hole, a type of solitary confinement, by order of the commanding officer, 'and when confined thereto be handcuffed and subsisted on bread and water only.'⁷⁰ The fact that only the commanding officer could order this punishment demonstrates that Glentworth, or the senior officer commanding at the time, whilst concerned in maintain discipline, did not want their officers administering harsh punishments without their consent. Reduction to the ranks, either permanently or temporary, was a very common punishment administered by Glentworth and his officers.⁷¹ Not only did the offender suffer the indignity of losing a level of rank in the command structure of the regiment, but he also lost the respective pay that he normally would have received, until promoted once again.

The harsh discipline may indicate a lack of experience from the officers of the regiment, unused to keeping a large body of civilians-turned-soldiers together as a cohesive unit. While in Kells, many of the men, for want of shoes, had taken to wearing their riding boots, so Glentworth ordered that any man found wearing his boots when he had not been ordered to wear them would be tried by court martial.⁷² While the financial cost of replacing worn riding boots would have been high and would have fallen to Glentworth, this response is nevertheless excessive. Similarly, a Corporal Green was reduced to the ranks for 'saddling his horse before trumpet sounding.'⁷³ Green further compounded his problem by refusing a sergeant's orders to unsaddle the horse, adding disobedience of direct orders to his crime of breach of regulations. However, this punishment was only a short-term one, as Green was restored to his former rank a week later.⁷⁴ These discipline problems may be contrasted with the experiences of the Donegal Militia, where the regimental order book records only minor infractions; evidently Conyngham and Maxwell were better at maintaining unit discipline

⁷⁰ Regimental order, 25 Feb. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁷¹ Regimental orders, 29 Dec. 1794 and 31 Jan. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁷² Regimental order, 7 Mar. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁷³ Regimental order, 14 Apr. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁷⁴ Regimental order, 22 Apr. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

than Glentworth and his officers. Conyngham had previously been lieutenant colonel in the regular army while Glentworth only had experience in the Irish Volunteers, which never saw any major active service.

It was important that the men maintained good relations with the local population, whom they had been assigned to guard, therefore the men were ordered not get drunk in the local drinking establishments, and night-time comings and goings at the barracks were restricted.⁷⁵ Freedom of movement for officers eventually improved in April 1795 although restriction on the rank-and-file remained in place.⁷⁶ A garrison order in March 1795, stating that no soldiers in the garrison at Carlow were to force the locals to sell provisions they brought to market, indicates that soldiers were abusing their authority in order to get better deals on produce, at the expense of the local population.⁷⁷ Similar problems experienced by the Donegal Militia when purchasing provisions from the local population illustrate that the relationship between town garrisons and the local population was often fragile.⁷⁸

Despite the ruling that the fencibles and militia were to rank equally in the service, there was still a perceived superiority in relation to the fencible regiments. In early 1795 it was reported that the men of the 2nd Fencible Dragoons had not been giving ‘the proper respect’ to the officers of the Westmeath Militia when they passed and, as a result, Glentworth ordered that whenever the men of the regiment met an officer of any regiment, they were to raise their hand to their cap.⁷⁹ This demonstrates the complicated nature of the Irish Establishment, and how different regiments and formations perceived themselves. Proper respect and decorum was considered to be essential for a regiment to operate properly and any tensions between the regiments would have damaged morale. At a time when Irish

⁷⁵ Regimental order, 16 Feb. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁷⁶ Regimental order, 14 Apr. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁷⁷ Garrison order, 6 Mar. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁷⁸ Donegal Militia Order Book, 20 June 1794 (N.L.I., MS 9889).

⁷⁹ Regimental orders, 13 Jan. 1795 (N.L.I. Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

society was beginning to become more destabilised, good unit morale was of the utmost importance. Glentworth's regiment faced a serious challenge.

Within a week of arriving in Kells the 2nd Fencibles had held two regimental courts martial, though no details of the incidents that led to these courts martial are recorded.⁸⁰ Discipline problems remained minor but frequent, with regimental courts martial handling most cases rather than the general courts martial, that tried more serious offences. In separate incidents, a Sergeant Dooley was suspended for one week for not releasing a prisoner from the black hole when his confinement time had ended and later suspended without pay for a week for failing to make out his troops' mess returns correctly.⁸¹ In a single month, June 1795, transgressions included from stealing from other members of the regiment, a drunkenness, disrespecting a senior officer, and acting 'irregular' in the streets of Kells.⁸² A Sergeant Wade was even suspended for not noticing that a man in his troop had removed his boots contrary to orders.⁸³ In August Glentworth found the regiment's barracks to be in a 'shameful and dirty' condition, and warned that anyone found disobeying his order to keep the quarters clean would be 'severely punished.'⁸⁴ The high frequency of such issues suggests that Glentworth's heavy-handed approach to unit discipline was simply not working and betrays his lack of active military experience.

Later that year, inter-regimental tensions would again occur in Kells, with 'unmilitary' disagreements arising between the men of the 2nd Fencible Cavalry and the men of the Leitrim Militia, who shared the garrison in the town.⁸⁵ A court of enquiry was established to find out the cause of this dispute.⁸⁶ Corporal McNamara of the 2nd Fencibles was promoted to sergeant for his 'good conduct' during this incident, the officers clearly

⁸⁰ Regimental orders, 4 and 6 May 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁸¹ Regimental orders, 17 May and 1-2 June 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁸² Regimental orders, 10, 13 and 14 June 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁸³ Regimental orders, 11 June 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁸⁴ Regimental orders, 3 Aug. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁸⁵ Garrison order, Lt. Col Jones, commanding officer Kells, 13 Oct. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16075).

⁸⁶ After orders, 17 Oct. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16075).

wishing that the other men would follow McNamara's example of restraint rather than brawling with fellow soldiers.

Preparations for the General Review

The regiment needed to be properly equipped if it was to operate effectively, yet the intensifying conflict across Europe put the British and Irish governments under increasing pressure to provide sufficient arms and equipment to all of the armed forces. During the summer of 1795 a thorough examination of the supplies of the 2nd Fencibles was carried out; a Sergeant Buckley was suspended for one week after one of his men, assigned for piquet duty, was not properly supplied with ammunition.⁸⁷ Glentworth later ordered that all the ammunition was to be taken in to store, and only assigned to the piquet guard and those with permission of the commanding officer.⁸⁸ Various orders were given to the regiment in July, requesting returns of the number of bayonets and scabbards, inspections of arms and accoutrements and lists of unserviceable horses in each troop.⁸⁹ The men of the 2nd Fencibles were ordered not to take another man's arms or accoutrements without permission of the commanding officer of their troop.⁹⁰ A general move towards a more professional approach to garrison duty may be seen from these equipment inspections, as well as changes in guard duties. A subaltern was assigned to inspect the night piquets at least twice per night, and a detachment of a seven men were to patrol the roads 'near the town, twice during the night.'⁹¹ Not only would these revisions help prevent crime and other trouble in the area, but the more time the men spent patrolling and training, the less time they had for making trouble themselves. Kells may have also been a location prone to trouble; a year later, after the

⁸⁷ Regimental orders, 29 June 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁸⁸ Regimental orders, 4 July 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁸⁹ Regimental orders, 7, 8 and 15 July 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁹⁰ Regimental orders, 16 July 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁹¹ Regimental orders, 24 July 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

fencibles had moved on, a number of robberies were reported in Kells and a yeomanry corps was formed as a result.⁹²

In late August the men were informed that Major General Eustace would review the regiment in the first week of September, in order to determine the regiment's readiness for action.⁹³ The anticipation of this review helps explain the senior officers' concern with the appearance of the men, their equipment and their ability to drill. As Glentworth had no prior military experience, apart from the Volunteers, it is likely that the drill manuals and instructions were the only things that he could focus on in order to bring his regiment up to the required standards. It may be said that Glentworth was more a politician than a soldier, more of a martinet than a commander, but nevertheless he did appear to have made efforts to improve the quality of his regiment.

Glentworth's efforts, and those of his men, paid off when the major general signified his 'high opinion and approbation' of the regiment, following the review on 4 September.⁹⁴ Eustace approved of both their appearance and discipline, although it may be argued that the latter was more important than the former. Indeed, Eustace's expectations were 'far exceeded' which may suggest the general quality of the auxiliary forces in Ireland at this time was not particularly good. At the same time as this good news, the regiment continued to expand, with a party being sent to Dungannon to recruit.⁹⁵ Detachments were also sent to Mullingar, County Westmeath and Ballyhaise, County Cavan, in order to escort new recruits and horses back to the regiment.⁹⁶

Following on from the successful review by the major general, the 2nd Fencibles were granted the honour of a review by the Commander-in-Chief of the forces in Ireland,

⁹² P. Shiels to Thomas Pelham, 30 Oct. 1796 (N.A.I., S.O.C., MS 1015/31).

⁹³ Regimental orders, 27 Aug. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁹⁴ Regimental orders, 5 Sept. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16074).

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Regimental orders, 28 and 30 Sept. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16075).

Robert Cuninghame.⁹⁷ The men were ordered to have everything in perfect order, and parades were cancelled in order for the men to prepare for the inspection, as Glentworth wished to present the best appearance to the Commander-in-Chief.

ROTATION AROUND IRELAND: LAOIS, TIPPERARY AND CORK

Duties in Laois and Tipperary

In late November 1795 the 2nd Fencibles were issued orders to move to their new quarters in County Laois, with their headquarters at Mountmellick on 1 December.⁹⁸ The men were ordered to take the greatest care of their new barracks, so as not to recreate the filthy conditions that had so displeased Glentworth.⁹⁹ By February 1796, the regiment, also referred to as the 2nd Fencible Light Dragoons, consisted of six troops of cavalry, commanded by the colonel, lieutenant colonel, major and three captains.¹⁰⁰

By 2 May 1796 the regiment's headquarters had been relocated to Clonmel.¹⁰¹ As the regiment prepared to move from Mountmellick to Clonmel, the commanding officer noted that a large quantity of arms and equipment had been lost during the regiment's time in Mountmellick. He therefore ordered that the first man to be found having lost any of his allocated arms or equipment would be confined, tried by court martial, punished and charged for the loss. More punishment was administered to Sergeant Maher for loss of the feather in his helmet through his 'negligence.'¹⁰²

Fewer field days were held in Mountmellick, but this training recommenced when the 2nd Fencibles Cavalry relocated to Clonmel, which may suggest that they regiment did

⁹⁷ Regimental orders, 3 Oct. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16075).

⁹⁸ Garrison order, 20 Nov. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16075).

⁹⁹ Regimental order, Mountmellick, 3 Dec. 1795 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16075).

¹⁰⁰ Regimental order, Mountmellick, 4 Feb. 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16075).

¹⁰¹ Regimental order, Clonmel, 2 May 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16076).

¹⁰² Regimental order, 22 May 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16076).

not have the proper space when stationed in Mountmellick.¹⁰³ Detachments were still sent out occasionally to garrison other areas and assist the local authorities.¹⁰⁴ Escort parties were also periodically required for deserters from other regiments, including the Meath Militia, the Irish Brigade, and the only other fencible cavalry regiment, Lord Roden's 1st Fencible Light Dragoons.¹⁰⁵ The officers also had to perform individual duties, such as acting as judges in courts martial.¹⁰⁶

Leadership and discipline in Laois and Tipperary

Lieutenant Colonel Monsell, not Glentworth, appears to have held command for most of the time in Laois and Tipperary. This is likely due to the fact that Glentworth, as an M.P. and Privy Council member, would often have been absent while attending to his civilian duties. This was not an uncommon occurrence; many Ascendancy officers held political positions also, and it is somewhat paradoxical that their political careers benefited from being able to claim military experience and leadership, yet persistent absence due to political duties meant that they were not actually leading their regiments on a day-to-day basis, with command falling instead to more junior officers. In a regiment like the 2nd Fencibles, where the commander was inexperienced to begin with, it is highly likely that such inconsistency in leadership and discipline would have had a negative impact on how a regiment operated.

Although discipline improved when the regiment moved to Mountmellick, problems began once again in Clonmel. Courts martial still took place but no serious offences were recorded. Major Wilson, in March 1796, observed that discipline was eroding due to the non-commissioned officers drinking with the rank and file, and so forbade this 'unmilitary' practice.¹⁰⁷ The dual importance of maintaining discipline when on duty may be seen in the

¹⁰³ Regimental order, 8 May 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16076).

¹⁰⁴ Regimental order, Mountmellick, 31 Mar. 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16075).

¹⁰⁵ Regimental order, 12 May 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16076); Regimental order, 13 June and 1 July 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16076).

¹⁰⁶ Regimental order, 12 May 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16076).

¹⁰⁷ Regimental order, Mountmellick, 31 Mar. 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16075).

court martial of a corporal, who was charged with neglecting to supervise the changing of the sentries when on barrack guard, and also ordered a man into town to find him some liquor.¹⁰⁸ This problem of alcohol was also evident in Clonmel, when Glentworth observed a ‘disposition’ for some of the regiment to frequent public houses and neglect their duties, and so he ordered his men not to enter any public houses.¹⁰⁹

During the summer of 1796, the order books of the 2nd Fencibles also record the costs for treatment of venereal diseases, information which is not contained in any of the other order books studied in this thesis; a pox treatment cost half a guinea (about ten shillings) and treatment of the clap (gonorrhoea) cost a crown (five shillings).¹¹⁰ The absence of such a record in the other order books, along with the high sums charged relative to the average trooper’s wage of one shilling a day may indicate that contraction of venereal diseases was a particular issue for the 2nd Fencibles, with Monsell attempting to implement economic disincentives to discourage risky sexual behaviour that would not only have health impacts for the men directly involved but also lead to disruption for the unit as a whole.

In September 1796 the regiment was once again reviewed by a general officer, this time Major General Sir James Duff.¹¹¹ Monsell recommended that all the men needed to do was to remain silent, in order to be ‘perfect in their business in the field.’¹¹² He evidently had confidence that his men would pass the review with a good report, and that they would demonstrate their readiness to take to the field at the shortest notice. While Monsell was not quite as highly ranked in Ascendancy society as Glentworth, he evidently still wished to demonstrate his own ability as a commander, organising his men in a way that reflected well on his own reputation.

¹⁰⁸ Regimental order, Mountmellick, 21 Apr. 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16076).

¹⁰⁹ Regimental order, 12 Aug. 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16076).

¹¹⁰ Regimental order, 27 May 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16076).

¹¹¹ Maj. Gen. Duff to officer commanding 2nd Fencible Light Dragoons, 4 Sept. 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16076).

¹¹² Regimental order, 10 Sept. 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16076).

The praise and confidence in the regiment during these reviews is at odds with the continuing degradation of morale and discipline within the regiment. In October 1796 Corporal O'Dea brought a prisoner that was in his care into the town for a drink, where the prisoner escaped.¹¹³ As a result, O'Dea was reduced to the ranks and sentenced to 999 lashes, of which 325 were administered; on account of the goodwill of the garrison commander in Clonmel, Lieutenant General Rowley, the rest of the punishment was remitted.¹¹⁴ Flogging was a common punishment in the British army at this time but up until now, the majority of the punishments inflicted on the regiment had been demotions and fines rather than flogging. That the officers felt that such extreme punishments were necessary to maintain discipline is indicative of a regiment sliding further into disarray.

The regiment also continued to recruit during this time, with a party sent to Tipperary to recruit horses.¹¹⁵ In November 1796 the levy money for fencible regiments in Ireland was set at eight guineas per man and twenty-five per horse in cavalry regiments and ten guineas per man in infantry regiments.¹¹⁶ The recruitment reforms were not restricted to the rank and file, the appointment of officers came under scrutiny in late 1796. Robert Brownrigg, military secretary at Horse Guards, London, wrote to the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Thomas Pelham in November regarding the fencible regiments in Ireland.¹¹⁷ Brownrigg highlighted the problem of fencible colonels selling commissions in their regiments and indicated that the king was 'displeased' with such activity.¹¹⁸ A formal decision was made and the assistant adjutant general in Cork, Nathaniel Massey, informed the 2nd Fencible Light Dragoons that their officers were not permitted to sell their commissions, as they had been appointed to these commissions rather than having purchased

¹¹³ Regimental order, 24 Oct. 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16077).

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Regimental order, 12 May 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16076).

¹¹⁶ Nathaniel Massey, Adj. Gen, to officer commanding 2nd Fencible Light Dragoons, 19 Nov. 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16077).

¹¹⁷ Brownrigg to Pelham, 21 Nov. 1796 (N.L.I., K.P., MS 1004/64).

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

them.¹¹⁹ It is not known if Glentworth took part in this practice. The sale of commissions did occur in the British army at this time, officers could gain a promotion by purchase but it may be seen by the preceding letter that this was not always approved of by the authorities. This practice indicates that while the officers were often initially eager to establish their regiments, and subsequent reputation, economic needs forced some officers to resort to the more extreme measures in order to get new recruits or make some extra money. Since establishing a regiment, and paying for its uniforms etc., was an expensive business, it is unsurprising that some officers wished to make some money back.

Aftermath of the invasion attempts: The regiment moves to Cork

In late December 1796, in the aftermath of the failed French landings at Bantry Bay, the regiment was moved from Clonmel to Cork city, headquarters of the southern command district, under the overall command of Major-General Eyre Coote.¹²⁰ From Cork city, detachments were sent out to various places in County Cork; Innishannon, Dunmanaway and Bandon. These detachments would have been sent out in order to garrison the smaller towns and act in a complimentary mounted role to the militia infantry regiments in the area. The regiment's headquarters soon moved to Bandon, under the overall command of Major General Hutchinson, where it would remain until 1800. It may be reasoned that by stationing the regiment at Bandon, almost midway between Cork city and Bantry Bay, location of the failed French landing, the fencibles would be able to respond quickly to threats to either location, as well as guarding Bandon itself. The 2nd Fencible Light Dragoons shared the garrison in Bandon with the Leitrim Militia and Lord Roden's regiment of Irish fencible cavalry, sharing guard and patrol duties.

The south of Ireland was the closest target for an enemy landing and the regiment's location in County Cork meant that it was ordered to be in near constant state of readiness.

¹¹⁹ Nathaniel Massey, to Lord Glentworth, 30 Nov. 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16077).

¹²⁰ J. J. McGregor, *History of the French Revolution: and of the wars resulting from that memorable event* (12 vols, London, 1828), v, 81-2.

Following on from the failed invasion, the regiments on the Irish Establishment were on high alert, and ordered to be ready to march at the shortest notice. As a result the wives of the soldiers were not permitted to march with their husbands, but an allowance of four pence per day was given to each women.¹²¹ This was a problem for the Irish auxiliary regiments, as the military authorities did not wish for the army to be slowed down by dependents. However, the allowances granted to the wives of soldiers illustrate that the authorities did still display a sense of duty to their men.

The regiment was charged with patrolling Bandon at night, once every hour, and Captain Monsell was directed to ensure the men observed proper regularity and quietness in the town.¹²² This would indicate that the regiment had a twofold obligation, to prevent trouble in the streets but also to maintain good relations with the inhabitants of the town.¹²³ Hourly patrols are indicative of growing unrest in Ireland, as radicals and the disaffected prepared for the coming insurrection. The fencible cavalry were being extensively used in a police duties, an important task as the country was gradually moving towards rebellion. Indeed, the responsibility of the regiment in Cork was described in a letter from Captain Commandant John Thomas Monsell, commander of detachments, to Glentworth, where he requested a detachment for 'the preservation of the publick peace.'¹²⁴ This is a very different function to the counter invasion role of the Irish militia and the counterinsurgency role of the Irish yeomanry.

The weekly state of the regiment at Bandon, County Cork, in July 1797 stood at fourteen officers, twenty-three non-commissioned officers, 339 rank and file and 291 horses, with eight men and twenty-seven horses still to be enlisted.¹²⁵ A Lieutenant Massey of the

¹²¹ General Order, Bantry, 30 Dec. 1796 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16076).

¹²² General Order, Bandon, 27 Jan. 1797 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16077).

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Capt. Comdt. Monsell to Col. Lord Glentworth, Feb. 1797 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16077).

¹²⁵ Weekly return of 2nd Fencible Regt of Dragoons, 15 July 1797 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16680/5).

regiment served as Aide-de-Camp to Brigadier General Coote.¹²⁶ Glentworth was away from his regiment and back in Limerick ‘recruiting horse’ at this time, with Monsell in command in his place.¹²⁷

Regular mounted regiments included veterinary surgeons who received an extra eight shillings a day without deductions. However a Mr Lewis at the War Office informed William Elliot, military under-secretary at Dublin Castle, in August 1797 that fencible regiments were ‘not allowed vetenary [sic.] surgeons.’¹²⁸ With only eight, small mounted fencible regiments in Ireland at this time, this may have been a straightforward way to cut costs.¹²⁹ However, with 291 horses as of July 1797, this order would have been highly problematic for Glentworth and his men.¹³⁰ This incident also reflects the earlier problems experienced by the Irish Brigade, where initial support for the raising of new regiments by noblemen quickly evaporated in the face of economic and political realities.

Treason

In February 1797, Brigadier General Coote observed that the men of the garrison in Bandon were in the habit of drinking and rioting in the streets.¹³¹ Coote criticised the lack of respect given to the officers, stating that ‘without discipline there can be no army,’ and ordered that the first man found to be acting disrespectfully was to be tried by court martial and punished in ‘an exemplary manner.’¹³² However, discipline continued to be a problem for the garrison in Bandon. Most days involved the scheduling of a garrison court martial. Issues were not limited to the 2nd Fencibles; as many regiments of regulars, militia and fencibles were all quartered in the town, inter-regiment disputes and disturbances would have been frequent.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Weekly return of 2nd Fencible Regt of Dragoons, 14 July 1797 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16680/5).

¹²⁸ Lewis to Elliot, 21 of Aug. 1797 (N.L.I., K.P. 1004/167).

¹²⁹ Reid, *Armies of the Irish rebellion*, p. 21.

¹³⁰ Weekly return of 2nd Fencible Regt of Dragoons, 15 July 1797 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16680/5).

¹³¹ Garrison Order, Bandon, 21 Feb. 1797 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16077).

¹³² Ibid.

A most dramatic case of breakdown of discipline occurred in the summer of 1797. George Bennet, in his *History of Bandon*, recorded how Corporals McAuliffe and William Larracy, both of the 2nd Fencible Dragoon, along with two militiamen, were tried by court martial on 20 July 1797 ‘for beginning, exciting, causing, or joining in a mutiny or sedition in the corps to which they belong.’¹³³ Another fencible dragoon, Henry Curren, testified that McAuliffe and Larracy had attempted to induct him into the United Irishmen by promising him that if he joined he would never want ‘a friend, a shilling or a drink’ again, as long as he supported the French whenever they arrived.¹³⁴ They had planned to rise against their officers on 1 July and seize the camp that they were stationed in; as a result of this evidence, all four men were executed by firing squad.¹³⁵

This marked a major change in the disciplinary problems in the regiment, as previously the problems had been low-level disobedience issues that lacked a political aspect. The seriousness of the crimes was evident in the extremeness of punishment, and by the fact that the entire Bandon garrison were present to witness the executions, a reminder of the fate of traitors. Sedition of this level was not tolerated in any way and the men needed to be made an example of. The active sedition of members of the armed forces also indicates the changing political and social situation in Ireland, as the threat of armed insurrection was quickly becoming a reality, and it was not simply the Catholic peasantry that were the target for the United Irishmen, but also the government forces. A number of militia regiments also suffered disaffection in 1797, and further afield the Royal Navy was shaken by the mutinies at Spithead and the Nore.¹³⁶ Jocelyn’s 1st Irish Fencible cavalry also suffered disaffection, and in 1797 they were one of several regiments that actively offered cash rewards to those

¹³³ George Bennett, *The history of Bandon and the principal towns in the West Riding of Cork* (Cork, 1869), p. 502.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.503.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 504-5.

¹³⁶ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, pp 172-3; Willis, *In the hour of victory*, p. 121.

who assisted the authorities in rooting out and dealing with disaffection.¹³⁷ The cohesion of the British armed forces, and its position in the war, rested on a knife's edge.

In the introduction of this thesis it was noted that scholarship focuses on the rebellion of 1798, yet the events of that year did not occur in a vacuum and perhaps nowhere is this better exemplified than with the experiences of the 2nd Fencibles. With their staunch Ascendancy commander and close association with the regular army, one might have expected that such a regiment might have been the least likely to suffer disaffection during 1798. However, the problem ultimately begins much earlier than 1798, Glentworth's military heritage does not make up for his lack of military experience and the near-constant discipline problems, followed by often extreme punishments, suggest a vital lack of leadership and creates an environment in which the treasonous acts that occurred in 1797 are unsurprising.

1798 AND LATER YEARS OF SERVICE

As a member of the Lord Lieutenant's Privy Council, and Clerk of the Crown and Hanaper, Lord Glentworth was present at the declaration of martial law in March 1798, and not with his regiment.¹³⁸ Although Bandon, like most of Cork, was not significantly affected by insurrection, the regiment continued a peace-keeping role that was vital in the face of heightening disaffection in parts of the Irish populace. In April the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry were authorized to disperse any unlawful assemblies of people 'threatening the peace of the realm, and the lives and properties of His Majesty's loyal subjects,' without needing the preapproval of a civil magistrate.¹³⁹ Relationships with the local population were at a critical point and granting the regiment further powers to protect the 'loyal' citizens of the locality

¹³⁷ Musgrave, *Memoirs of the different rebellions in Ireland*, i, 210.

¹³⁸ Copy of proclamation of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 30 Mar. 1798, 3 Apr. 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16080).

¹³⁹ General Order of George Hewitt, Bandon, 3 Apr. 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16080).

indicates the extent of the efforts made by the Irish military to maintain stability. Extending this protection to peoples' property offered an economic incentive to remain loyal; men with homes and livelihoods to defend may have been less likely to rise up in rebellion against those helping to defend their homes and livelihoods.

While the 2nd Fencibles, along with others in the Cork garrison, suffered discipline issues, the fencibles overall were regarded as relatively dependable. Earlier that year Abercromby had been positive in his assessment of the fencibles in general, deeming them 'low in size but serviceable. Their discipline is superior to that of the militia – some few good officers amongst them, the bulk of them indifferent.'¹⁴⁰ Abercromby had not glossed over the faults of the Irish Establishment, and in particular the amateur militia, but he did evidently deem the fencibles, with their closer links to the regulars, as a better choice for garrisoning Ireland, if he had more of them.

Discipline and loyalty

The executions at Bandon in 1797, along with the flogging of a number of militiamen in 1798, indicate that morale and discipline were low in Cork in the months prior to the rebellion.¹⁴¹ Sir James Stewart, adjutant-general in Cork, was forced to remind the soldiers of the 'dreadful consequences' of allowing themselves to be seduced from their allegiance, and the solemn oath they had taken to defend their country and the laws of the land.¹⁴² This appeal to both justice and the defence of Ireland reflects a wider sentiment that the British military and politicians used in the 1790s to encourage their soldiers and sailors, and contrasts with the perceived collapse of law and order in France during the Revolution.

As well as an appeal to a sense of justice, Stewart also appealed to their sense of duty, when he ordered that the regimental commanders should remind their men of their duty

¹⁴⁰ Copy of a letter from Sir Ralph Abercromby to the Duke of York, Dublin 17 Feb. 1798 (N.L.I., Melville Papers, MS 54A/12)

¹⁴¹ General Order, Cork, 4 Apr. 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16080).

¹⁴² General Order, Nathaniel Massey, Cork, 4 Apr. 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16080).

and ‘let them never forget they are British and Irish soldiers.’¹⁴³ This reflects not only the pride and tradition associated with military service during the late eighteenth-century in Ireland and Britain, but also the concept of two distinct yet harmonious identities, that of being Irish and being British, and the fact that both nationalities could come together in the service of their king and respective countries. This cooperation would prove very successful in the coming years of the Revolutionary and subsequent Napoleonic wars, with British and Irish regiments operating very well in the Peninsula, in France and Belgium and on into the nineteenth-century.

Demonstrations of loyalty were not always in agreement with the authorities, as they had the potential to subvert or distract the authority of the commanding officers and discipline of the men. Stewart observed in early May that various Orange Order clubs had been established in the several regiments in Bandon and as such he ordered that regimental commanders to disband these clubs due to the ‘impropriety’ of the association.¹⁴⁴ Stewart urged the commanders to remind their men ‘that no distinction should exist among His Majesty’s loyal subjects.’¹⁴⁵ As the Orange Order was a Protestant organisation there would have been in opposition to granting any concessions to Catholics, as well seeing themselves as defenders of the traditions of the Ascendancy.

These clear orders indicate that the military authorities did not want religious tensions and discrimination to interfere with the military capabilities of the British armed forces; Stewart reminded the officers that the character of a man was to be measured on his faithful discharge of duty and obedience to orders rather than on his religious persuasion, which the law did not legislate against any more.¹⁴⁶ These changing attitudes, where duty and loyalty were now perceived the essential characteristics of a good soldier, demonstrate

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ General Order, Nathaniel Massey, Cork, 7 May 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16080).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

how competing Irish identities were beginning to find a common ground in military service to Britain, and in particular in the defence of Ireland in the late eighteenth-century.

Professional commanders did not have time for sectarian issues that would only inhibit the effective running of the military. It also bears a similarity to the evidence throughout this thesis that suggests that the divisions in society were far more intrinsically linked with wealth and power and perceived loyalty than with a particular creed.

Recruitment

As well as maintain discipline, the military forces continued to recruit. The 2nd Fencible Dragoons received £600 to recruit horses in April 1798, which would have reckoned at twenty-four horses at twenty five pounds each.¹⁴⁷ This was part of a larger push in recruitment of horses for the cavalry regiments on the Irish establishment. The total amount of money being issued came to £10,000, equivalent to about £560,300 in modern money, and indicates the serious efforts being taken by the government and military authorities to maintain a proper mounted cavalry arm, consisting of fourteen regiments of both regulars and fencibles, on the establishment.

However, not long after ordering the regiment to take in more mounts, they were ordered to give up mounts to other regiments that needed them. In early May the regiment was ordered to supply the newly arrived Hompesch's regiment of Chasseurs à Cheval with ten horses.¹⁴⁸ Colonel Ferdinand Hompesch's regiment was a German regiment in the British army, with recruits from many different countries, and during the coming fighting would earn themselves a ruthless reputation in suppressing revolt.¹⁴⁹ The regiment had arrived in April 1798, and contained a mix of Germanic and Irish surnames, Byland, O'Toole, de Grovestein and Buschmann, illustrating how Irish identities were spread far and wide in the

¹⁴⁷ Circular of George Hewitt, 19 Apr. 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16080).

¹⁴⁸ George Hewitt to James Stewart, 4 May 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16080).

¹⁴⁹ Eva Ó Cathoir, 'German mercenaries in Ireland, 1798-1807' in *Irish Sword*, xxii, no. 90 (2001), pp 406-26.

late eighteenth-century.¹⁵⁰ The officers were ordered to ensure that the horses drafted from the 2nd Fencibles were of good quality, and that the regiment was not trying to rid itself of unsuitable mounts. The use of German émigré troops in Ireland was evidently not as contentious an issue as the use of the Irish Brigade in Ireland, or even in Europe, had been.

The 1798 Rebellion in Cork

The United Irishmen began their rebellion on 21 May. However, the area of Cork remained largely quiet, and the order book of the 2nd Fencible Dragoons continues to record normal guard and administrative duties in the days following. Despite the difficulties faced by government forces in south Leinster, the garrison in Bandon continued to observe regular traditions, parading for the king's birthday on 4 June.¹⁵¹ It may be reasoned that the large number of troops stationed in Cork and the surrounding area, ready to resist a French landing, dissuaded the rebels from rising in great numbers there.

The garrison was however ordered to increase security in Bandon, with the patrols bringing in anyone found selling liquor or being in the streets after dark.¹⁵² They were ordered to be careful however, and not molest any person who had a good reason to be out after dark, which would indicate that the authorities did not want to unnecessarily provoke the locals into rebellion, again echoing the earlier resolutions to ensure the protection of the 'loyal' inhabitants of the country.

While the preservation of law and order was of utmost importance to the government and military and all troops were ordered to make every effort to defeat the rebels, they were also ordered to exercise restraint so the local population might feel secure if government forces were in their neighbourhood.¹⁵³ Strict orders were issued to not burn houses or damage properties. The Bandon garrison was praised by a Lieutenant Colonel Monroe for its

¹⁵⁰ Portland to Camden, 19 Apr. 1798 (N.L.I., K.P. MS 1004/259).

¹⁵¹ Garrison Order, Bandon, 3 June 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16080).

¹⁵² Garrison Order, Bandon, 31 May 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16080).

¹⁵³ General Order of George Hewitt, 31 May 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16080).

alertness and he expressed his confidence that any attack on the town would be 'ineffectual.'¹⁵⁴ The crime of plundering was to be punished by death on the spot, such was the need for the officers to not only maintain discipline, but also maintain good relations with the locals.¹⁵⁵ House burning had been a practice used in General Lake's heavy-handed disarming of Ulster the previous year and the government forces in 1798 resorted to such tactics on occasion. The yeomanry in particular, having the least amount of military training, were blamed for much of the sectarian house-burning in Wexford and Wicklow.¹⁵⁶

While his regiment was tasked with guarding Bandon from attack, Glentworth was in Dublin attending to his political duties. Upon learning of the rebellion he offered his services to General Lake, and accompanied him to the defeat of the rebels at Vinegar Hill.¹⁵⁷ Lord Roden was also present, but actively took part in the battle, leading his fencible regiment in a 'gallant charge.'¹⁵⁸ Roden's regiment, also known as the 'Foxhunters,' was also present at Gibbit Rath on the Curragh in County Kildare, where a false alarm resulted in government forces attacking a large number of rebels who had recently surrendered; the rebels were subsequently 'pursued with much slaughter' by the Foxhunters.¹⁵⁹ The defeat of the rebel army at Vinegar Hill signified the end of the first phase of hostilities, and the 2nd Fencible Dragoons recommenced training and normal duties; Monroe ordered the mounted regiments in Bandon to attend artillery practice, so their horses could become accustomed to artillery fire, something that may have emerged as a problem in the fighting in Wexford.¹⁶⁰

The frequent use of the 1st Fencible Dragoons suggests that the authorities had faith in their ability of the fencibles in Ireland, be they English, Irish or Scottish in origin, and deemed them to be closer in reliability to the regulars than the militia, or yeomanry. The

¹⁵⁴ Garrison Order, Bandon, 20 June 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16080).

¹⁵⁵ General Order, Cork, 2 Sept. 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16080).

¹⁵⁶ *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, iii, 89.

¹⁵⁷ *London Gazette*, 26 June 1798.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Gordon, *History of the rebellion in Ireland*, p. 100.

¹⁶⁰ Garrison Order, Bandon, 25 June 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16080).

importance of the fencibles may be seen in August 1798, when Captain Herbert Taylor, Cornwallis' Aide-de-Camp, informed William Wickham that the fencibles and regulars were to be posted along the coast, along with 'such of the militia as can be depended upon.'¹⁶¹ The following day French troops landed at Killala Bay, County Mayo. While this had little effect on the 2nd Fencible Dragoons, stationed far from the fighting, another detachment of Jocelyn's 1st Fencible Dragoons was involved, being present at the defeat of government forces at Castlebar on 27 August and their later victory over the French invaders at Ballinamuck on 8 September.¹⁶²

Return to normal duties

Following the defeat of the rebellion, the 2nd Irish Fencible Dragoons remained in Bandon until October, when they were relocated to Cappoquin and Lismore in County Waterford.¹⁶³ The regiment resumed its usual role of patrolling and keeping the peace, as well as training and the occasional court martial, while sharing the garrison with Lord Elgin's regiment of fencibles, a Scottish Highlander corps. Another role selected for the 2nd Fencibles was that of express riders; two dragoons were ordered to be always ready at each dispatch station to ride with dispatches to the next station, without delay.¹⁶⁴ Swift communication was essential for the armed forces in Ireland, as they maintained a constant vigilance for surprise attacks.

In March 1799 Cornwallis reported to Portland that the fencible, like the militia, were extensively dispersed around the country, their discipline was suffering and it was becoming 'exceedingly difficult to assemble a sufficient force to give early opposition to an invading enemy.'¹⁶⁵ The fencibles were also reported to be very badly supplied, reflecting the pressures that were being felt by Britain, as an allied invasion of the Netherlands would

¹⁶¹ Taylor to Wickham, 21 Aug. 1798, *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, ii, 389.

¹⁶² McAnally, 'The government forces engaged at Castlebar in 1798'; *Finn's Leinster Journal*, 22 Sept. 1798.

¹⁶³ Garrison Order, Bandon, 1 Oct. 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16081).

¹⁶⁴ General Order, Cork, 7 Oct. 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16081).

¹⁶⁵ Cornwallis to Portland, 11 Mar. 1799, *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, iii, 74.

have required much of their economic and military investment. The rebellion in Ireland had been suppressed but the military was under-equipped and the situation was far from completely stable.

Transfers and disbandment

The 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry spent a relatively uneventful two years in Lismore and afterwards marched to Cork in August 1800.¹⁶⁶ Recruitment to the fencibles in Ireland had been halted earlier that year.¹⁶⁷ As the political, military and social situation in Ireland calmed in the years following the rebellion, plans for the union of the two parliaments of Britain and Ireland were put into motion. Glentworth, while not particularly impressive in his role as colonel of the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry, was instrumental in securing the support of Limerick M.P.s for the Act of Union, becoming one of the twenty eight Irish peers in the newly united parliament and rewarded for his political loyalty with the Earldom of Limerick.¹⁶⁸ Glentworth's uncle, Edmund Sexton Pery, opposed the union, and his house in Dublin was the meeting place of the anti-union politicians.¹⁶⁹

One bargaining tool used by the British government was the granting of permission for the militia to volunteer for overseas service in regular regiments, and the men of the Irish fencibles were also permitted to transfer to the regulars. The granting of this was seen as a gesture of faith and goodwill towards the militia and fencibles, implying that they were able to become professional soldiers. Of course, for the British military authorities, if offered a supply of relatively trained men, many of whom had seen actual combat in 1798. As the memory of 1798 gradually receded the focus shifted to providing the armed forces on overseas service, rather than garrison duties in Ireland. All of the cavalry regiments on the

¹⁶⁶ Regimental Order, Lismore, 5 Aug. 1800 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16081).

¹⁶⁷ General Order, Nugent to Grose, 4 Mar. 1800 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/177).

¹⁶⁸ Cornwallis to Portland, 14 Aug. 1799, *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, iii, 125; Edmund Henry Pery (1758-1844), *The complete peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom* (London, 13 vols, 1929), vii, 663-4.

¹⁶⁹ 'Edmund Sexton Pery (1719-1806)' Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (18 Apr. 2013).

Irish establishment were expected to supply horses to the regular regiments, with the 2nd Fencible Cavalry ordered to send forty horses to the 4th Dragoon Guards, itself an Irish cavalry regiment first raised in 1685.¹⁷⁰ Cavalry regiments were expensive to maintain and the authorities were keen to employ them in the places where they were needed most. The loss of horses from the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry would have reduced its effectiveness, already damaged from the poor regimental discipline.

The 2nd Fencible Cavalry were disbanded in the autumn of 1800. By this time the Irish Establishment in general was being reduced, as peace with France seemed imminent, and other Irish fencible regiments were either being disbanded or volunteered for overseas service, such as the Ancient Irish Fencibles who served in the Egyptian campaign against Napoleon and the Tarbert Fencibles, who served in garrison duties in England and in the Channel Islands.¹⁷¹ Glentworth's regiment did not transfer to overseas service, nor was it re-embodied when the war began again in 1803, which suggests that the discipline problems of the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry made the authorities reluctant to return to a regiment that had proven troublesome throughout its existence.

CONCLUSIONS

The Irish fencible cavalry regiments allowed government to free up regular cavalry regiments for overseas service while harnessing the Ascendancy's eagerness to demonstrate their ability and loyalty to government. Yet the fact that so few Irish fencible regiments were raised contrasts with the supposed faith that the military authorities had in them.

Abercromby had deemed the fencibles superior to the militia, a view shared by others such as Cornwallis. However, politicians were more cautious in their opinion; Camden, as Lord

¹⁷⁰ General Order of George Nugent, Adj. Gen., 23 Aug. 1800 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16081); Chappell, *Wellington's Peninsula regiments*, p. 8.

¹⁷¹ Murphy, *The Irish Brigades*, p. 239.

Lieutenant in 1796, stated that ‘the fencibles are certainly adequate to many purposes, but neither sufficiently numerous nor powerful enough to give much confidence.’¹⁷² The low numbers of fencible regiments may be attributed to the rising popularity of yeomanry regiments after 1796; with their strong social and local character, yeomanry regiments were a preferable option for aspiring Ascendancy commanders than a fencible regiment that could be rotated out of the locality. Scottish and English fencible regiments were rotated to Ireland to quickly augment the garrison, and therefore it may be reasoned that there was less need for specifically Irish fencible regiments.

Command of the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry offered Glentworth an opportunity to demonstrate his political loyalty to government; the fact that he raised a fencible regiment, which was thereby only liable for service within the British Isles, shows that Glentworth’s interests were focused domestically, where he would be able to lead his regiment and enjoy the prestige that came with it. The many discipline problems experienced by 2nd Fencible Cavalry demonstrate how poor leadership, combined with the lack of any real commitment to making a change, could prove very damaging for any regiment, especially one that was charged with not only preparing for an enemy invasion, but also with policing a restless population.

Despite their connection with the regular army, and the associated perception of superiority, it can be concluded based on this analysis of the primary source material that the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry were quite similar to other Irish regiments in terms of organization, and perhaps even inferior to certain ‘amateur’ formations in terms of leadership and capability. There was an emphasis placed on the pageantry and social aspects of military life, to the detriment of training and discipline. The early years of the regiment include many courts martial due to disobedience and disrespect of officers, often in conjunction with alcohol abuse. While the Donegal Militia also had initial problems with discipline, that

¹⁷² Camden to Portland, 6 Aug. 1796 (T.N.A., H.O., 100/62/159).

regiment quickly overcame those issues to become a cohesive, united formation, with a level of professionalism that the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry never appears to have reached. The execution of two dragoons of Glentworth's regiment contrasts with the fact that no men of Clements' Donegal Militia were even tried, let alone executed, for disaffection in 1797.¹⁷³

The lack of good officers and in particular, lack of a consistent commanding officer, in the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry is also evident. Glentworth lacked the military experience that other Ascendancy commanding officers, such as Colonel Conyngham, possessed. In addition, he appears to have lacked leadership characteristics; though highly positioned in Irish politics, it was claimed that he was never widely respected and thought to be too proud.¹⁷⁴ The discipline problems, and the escalating harsh punishments that followed suggest that Glentworth and his officers were more martinets than capable officers, and that for them military service did not turn out quite as expected. It must be remembered that indiscipline was a problem faced by all regiments in the British army during this time, but when a regiment such as the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry was ordered out on service without an adequate leadership structure it is unsurprising that discipline and morale suffered.

The need for a nationwide police force in Ireland is reflected in the manner in which Glentworth's regiment was used; the regiment constantly guarded and patrolled the areas they were sent to, and these places did not suffer major disaffection. Unlike the Donegal Militia and the other regiments stationed in Leinster and Connaught, Glentworth's men never saw any major action, and it remains unknown whether they would have been very effective against substantial attack, given their discipline problems and lack of experienced officers. The following maps (Fig. 5.1-2), demonstrates the widespread use of the regiment in the areas deemed most at risk, south and the east. The large deployment areas also reflects the fact that the regiment was a mounted one and more able to cover large areas effectively.

¹⁷³ Nelson, *The Irish militia*, pp 172-3; Bennett, *The history of Bandon*, p. 502.

¹⁷⁴ 'Edmond Henry Pery (1758–1845)' Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (17 Apr. 2013)

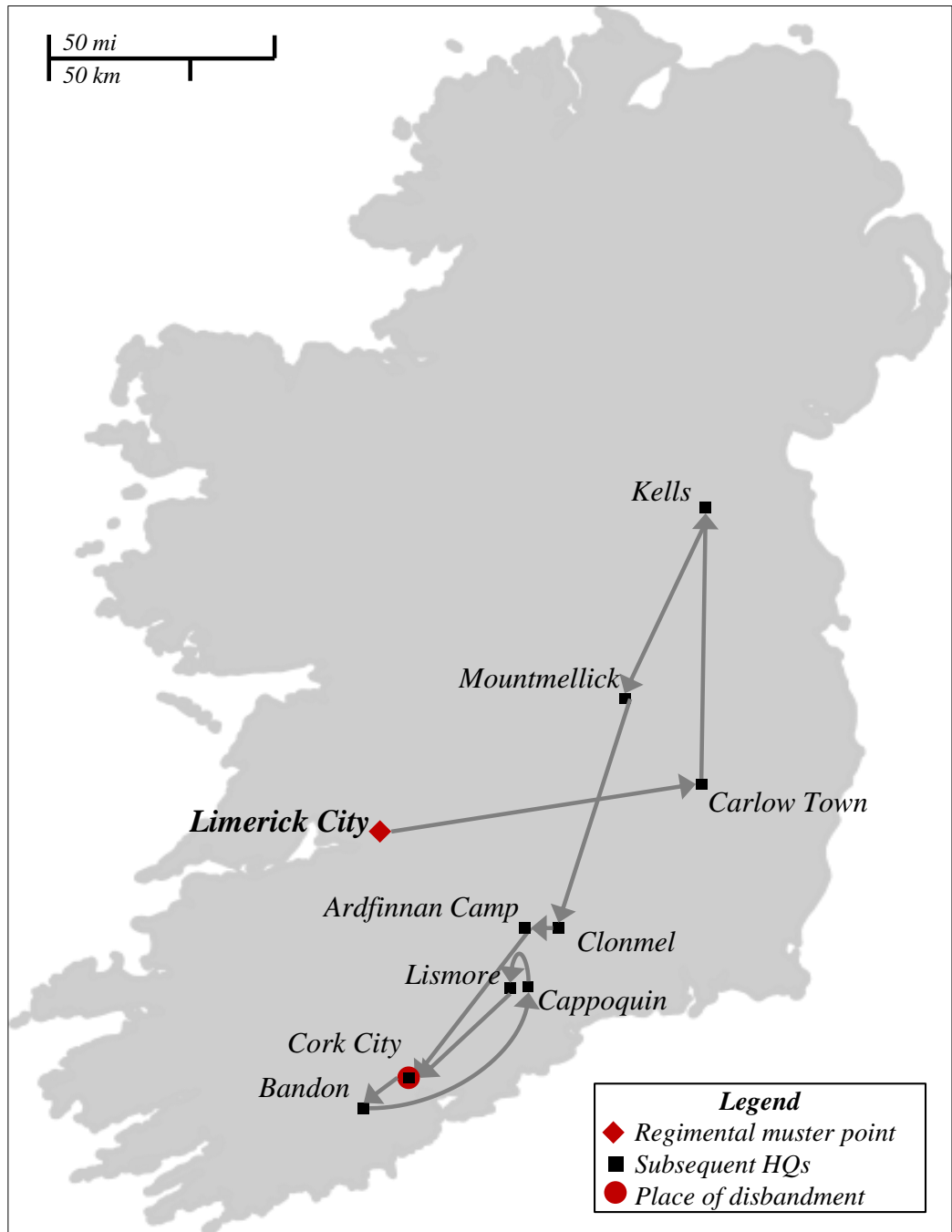


Fig. 5.1: Areas of service of the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry (1794-1800)

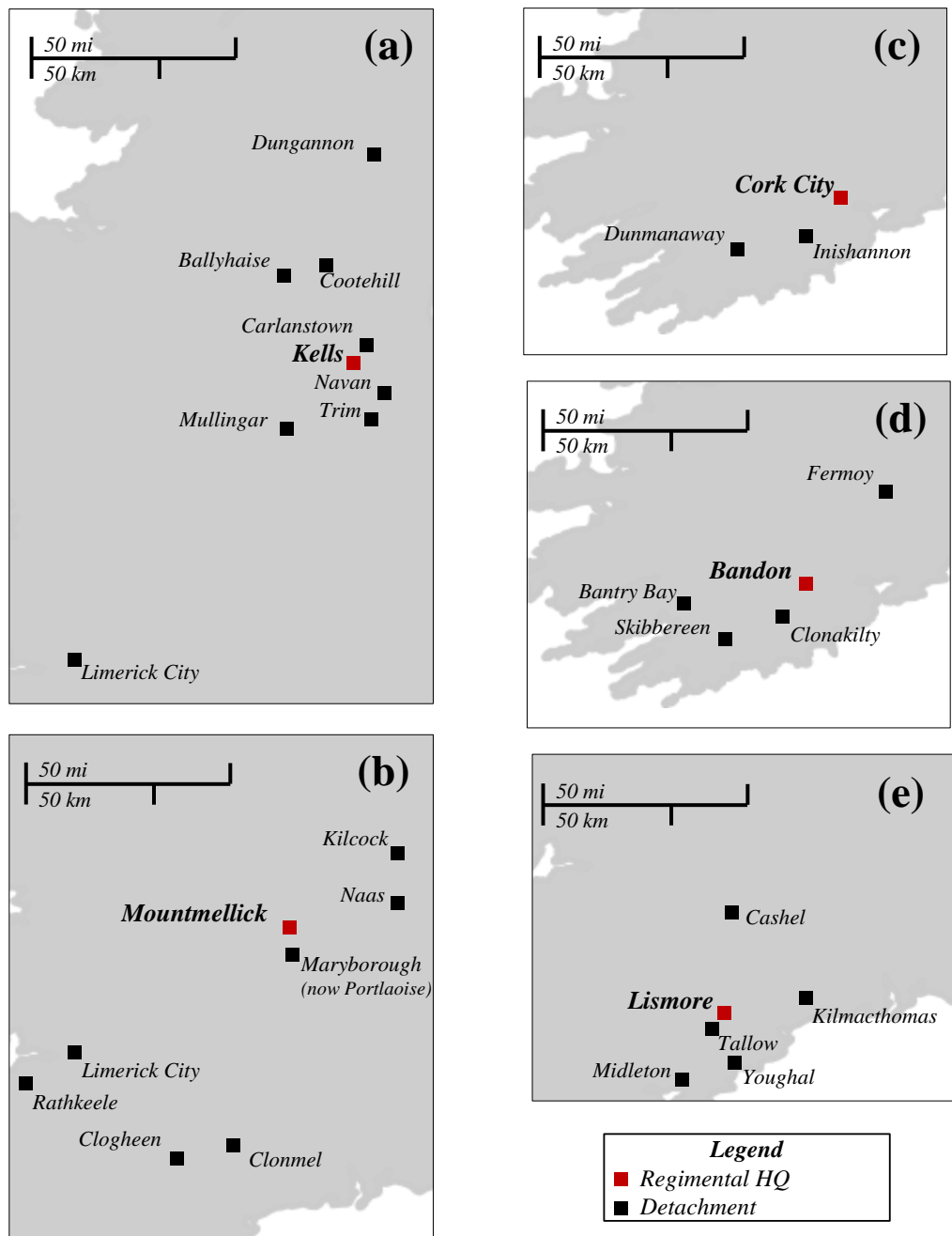


Fig. 5.2: Detachments of the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry (1794-1800)

While the militia and yeomanry have received a certain amount of scholarly attention, the same may not be said of the Irish fencibles. This may be partly due to the small numbers of Irish fencibles when compared with the militia and yeomanry but it is still important to note this aspect of Irish military identity. Glentworth, given his position in Irish political society, appears to have been more interested in the prestige that military rank offered, and in particular a rank in a regiment more closely related to the professional regular

army than its amateur rivals. While the yeomanry, also very much associated with concepts of loyalty, were very much localised in nature, protecting homes and neighbourhoods, the Irish fencibles were put to greater use and represent an Irish military tradition more closely associated with the regular army. The loyalty of Glentworth may not have been in doubt but his lack of leadership skills resulted in the treason and execution of two of his men. The twin demands of loyalty and ability were applied to Glentworth and despite an avowing of the former he was decidedly lacking in the latter.

Unlike Lord Jocelyn and his fencible regiment, the 2nd Fencible Cavalry were not noted for any particular sectarian excesses against the local population, but Glentworth did speak out against further Catholic reform after the union.¹⁷⁵ At his funeral in 1844 his coffin was almost thrown into the River Shannon by a mob, which may indicate that his personal political views did not find favour with the civilian population.¹⁷⁶ However, despite Glentworth's views, the British military in general was becoming much more open to the concept of Catholic participation in the armed forces, as evidenced by General Stewart ordering the men of the Bandon garrison to 'never forget they are British and Irish soldiers.'¹⁷⁷ It was this idea of unity between British and Irish soldiers that would dominate the British military for most of the coming nineteenth-century, as Irish soldiers came to represent one third of the British army. The concept of cooperation between British and Irish soldiers was as important at home as it was abroad, for both domestic security and the successful waging of overseas campaigns. It would appear that the competing Irish identities that had found a home in the militia did not find a home in the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry. Glentworth's strong conservative Ascendancy identity did not unite all the men under his command, and his lack of leadership ability resulted not only in the breakdown of discipline

¹⁷⁵ 'Robert Jocelyn (1721–97)' Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (18 Apr. 2012); 'Edmond Henry Pery (1758–1845)' Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (18 Apr. 2012).

¹⁷⁶ 'Edmond Henry Pery (1758–1845)' Dictionary of Irish Biography Online (<http://dib.cambridge.org>) (17 Apr. 2013).

¹⁷⁷ General Order, Nathaniel Massey, Cork, 4 Apr. 1798 (N.L.I., Limerick Papers, MS 16080).

but even the planned treason of two of his men. An armed defence identity, until now more closely associated with the Ascendancy, was becoming more associated with a united Irish identity, one that included both Catholics and Protestants (as seen in the garrison order in Bandon). This union of identities, under the concept of 'Irishness' will now be discussed in the conclusion.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to examine how Irish identity developed within the British service during the French Revolutionary wars, a conflict which marked not only a turning point in European politics and warfare, but also in the history of Ireland. In the introduction, following an examination of the related literature, a number of key themes were identified in relation to Irish identity in the late eighteenth-century, and how these themes were reflected in the experiences of Irishmen in the British service. These included the development of the Protestant Ascendancy's identity (closely associated with loyalism and family military service, as well as an almost complete dominance of political life in Ireland), and the corresponding Irish Catholic identity (which began to develop a closer association with the British military in the 1790s, as their military link to the French monarchy diminished), as well as the rise of nationalism and loyalism in Ireland, as expressed through military means. Wider events, such as the spread of revolution and the increase in militarisation were also identified as having an effect on Ireland, but the historiography has tended to focus on the revolutionary aspect of Irish history in the late eighteenth-century, and not on the many Irishmen who served in the British military during the wars.

In my conclusion the findings of the case studies are contextualised within the broader international political and military history of the period, the Irish social, cultural and political landscape of the late eighteenth-century, and subsequent historiographical viewpoints. The themes identified in the introduction are re-examined in this conclusion, with reference to the experiences of the men in the case studies, in order to better understand how Irish identity developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries. These experiences of the men in the case studies demonstrate how many different Irish identities (Protestant and Catholic, upper and lower class, émigré and loyalist, etc.) participated, with varying degrees of success, in the British service. Rather than one rigid form of Irish

identity, the Irish soldier represented a wide range of identities that came together in the service of Britain and the defence of Ireland.

Irish historiography of the late eighteenth-century, as highlighted in the introduction, has tended to gravitate towards the United Irishmen and the rebellion of 1798, a focus favoured by later nationalist movements and nationalist historiography. Revisionist history sought to correct this but still focused on the events of 1798 and overlooked the Irishmen in the British service. This thesis sought to examine Irish identities within the British service, with a post-revisionist perspective, in order to gain a better, and more balanced, understanding of how Irish history developed alongside British and world history.

MILITARISATION OF IRELAND DURING THE WARS

Impact of the wars on enlistment of Irishmen in the British service

One of the main questions posed in the introduction to this thesis was how did the French Revolutionary wars impact Ireland and Irish enlistment in the British military, within Ireland? As the previous chapters and case studies have demonstrated, Ireland was heavily militarised during the period 1793 to 1802. While full industrial-scale militarisation did not occur until later in the nineteenth-century, the level of warfare raging across Europe during period of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars was unlike anything that had gone before, most obviously exemplified by the *levée en masse* of the French Republic. Britain needed to rapidly increase its armed forces, army and navy, for both home defence and overseas campaigns. Britain, including the Army, the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and the embodied militia, had proportionally more men under arms than any of the other powers, yet

still experienced manpower shortages.¹ Britain also utilised large numbers of foreign and colonial troops to augment their numbers and help garrison their territorial possessions.²

Ireland offered a large supply of manpower and many Irishmen were willing to enlist. Bartlett estimates that one in five Irishmen saw military service during the 1793-1815 period, with Karsten putting the number of Irishmen who enlisted in English regiments at 159000.³ Their motivation for enlisting varied; on a basic level the military offered steady employment and food, but it also offered ambitious and mostly Protestant Ascendancy officers the chance to gain prestige and display their loyalty and ability. In a similar manner Franco-Irish Catholic émigré officers also enlisted in the Irish Brigade in order to demonstrate their ability and justify the re-establishment of the brigade. The desire to display both loyalty and ability particularly influenced enlistment in the formations destined to defend Ireland, the militia, yeomanry and fencibles. Not only would these Irishmen be able to contribute to Ireland's defence and Britain's war effort, but they therefore avoided being sent overseas in a regular regiment or pressed into the Royal Navy. Overseas service was not necessarily seen as a negative however, as the enthusiastic volunteering to the line by militiamen at the time of the Union demonstrates. It is an often overlooked fact in both Irish historiography, and historiography of the British military, that Irishmen represented about one third of the British army during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars.⁴ Large numbers also enlisted in the Royal Navy.⁵ Soldiering became a common and widespread occupation for the male population and it may be concluded that this rapid militarisation of Ireland during the 1790s, as seen in various forms in all of the case studies, made the significant Irish contribution to the British military possible.

¹ Piers Mackesy, 'Strategic problems of the British war effort' in H. T. Dickinson (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789-1815* (London, 1989), pp 147-164, at p. 156.

² Ibid.

³ Bartlett, 'Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion', p. 247; Karsten, 'Irish soldiers in the British army', p. 36.

⁴ David, *All the King's men*, p. 367.

⁵ Alvin Jackson, *The two unions: Ireland, Scotland, and the survival of the United Kingdom, 1707-2007* (Oxford, 2012), p. 196.

Position of Ireland in French and British strategy

Related to this question of militarisation and the impact on Ireland was the question of whether Ireland was a key part of either French or British strategy? In addition, how did the role of Ireland in their strategies impact on the Irish soldiers?

This thesis has demonstrated that Ireland was not an essential part of French strategy, simply offering a useful diversion but in the end little strategic value when held against the great territorial conquests in Europe and the colonies. France had long-held military and religious links with Ireland, the so-called 'Wild Geese' tradition lasting almost a century under the Bourbon monarchy. However, once the French Revolution erased these traditional and familial ties, the new French Republic regarded Ireland in a more pragmatic manner. Analysis of the invasion files in the Service historique de la Défense indicates that the French were initially willing to allocate a large amount of time and resources to an invasion of Ireland, along with one of their most talented generals, Hoche. However, the intelligence reports included in the invasion files indicates that the French, and their United Irishmen allies, wrongly assumed that the population would welcome the landing force with open arms. This breakdown in intelligence fatally weakened the 1796 and 1798 invasion attempts.

The United Irishmen used rhetoric to further the goal of freedom for Ireland; Tone was convinced that 'under the powerful auspices of the French Republic, I hope and trust her independence and liberty will arise.'⁶ Yet even he recognised the stark pragmatism of the French politicians and commanders when Napoleon chose Egypt as his destination in the summer of 1798, rather than a landing in Britain or Ireland, dramatically declaring himself, 'lost in sensations of troubled emotions.'⁷ A successful conquest of Egypt would threaten British possessions in India and this was a better option for the ambitious Napoleon. The

⁶ *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone*, ed. William Theobald Wolfe Tone (2 vols, Washington, 1826), ii, 485.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 477.

lack of any strong French interest in Irish affairs was made even more apparent to Tone when news came of the rebellion; the French did not have confidence in their naval capabilities and the Directory put off sending aid until a more favourable time, much to Tone's chagrin.⁸ The rhetoric that had been used by the French to describe themselves as liberators to an oppressed race demonstrates the extensive use of propaganda to mask what was, in effect, simply a large scale diversion to destabilise British authority in Ireland and weaken British military and political power. Ireland was a useful pawn in the grand game of strategy that France was playing, but a pawn nonetheless.

However, while the invasion of Ireland by France was never given the attention it needed to succeed, the threat of this invasion heavily influenced British strategy in relation to Ireland. Large amounts of money were invested in securing Ireland from attack, both internal and external. The militia, yeomanry and fencibles all had the overall role of defending Ireland, and their numbers rapidly increased as the level of warfare across Europe intensified. Ireland had also been used as a location to send low strength British regiments to, rather than disband them.⁹ As estimated in the first chapter of this thesis, the recruitment costs for the Irish Establishment in late 1793 would have come to about £9.1 million in modern money. Added to this was the increase in physical defences for Ireland, the construction of new coastal forts, towers and batteries and the renovation and modernisation of older coastal forts and defensive structures. These defences would have cost a significant amount, both in terms of the labour involved but also, as the chapter demonstrated, in the form of compensation granted to civilians who had lost land to these works. Wakefield provides an account of the annual military expenditure for the Irish Establishment; £791,039 was spent in 1794, rising steadily to peak at £4,889,107 in 1800.¹⁰

⁸ Ibid., 507.

⁹ Reid, *Armies of the Irish rebellion*, p. 10.

¹⁰ Wakefield, *An account of Ireland*, ii, 823.

Furthermore, the troop movements of the militia and fencible regiments, as illustrated in the case studies, indicate the level of priority placed on protecting populated areas, in particular, Leinster and Munster, and implies that seriousness of the invasion threat. The 'Private, secret and confidential' correspondences between the Lord Lieutenant, Camden, and the Home Secretary, Portland, illustrate the considerable efforts made by the British authorities to maintain stability in Ireland. By relaxing or repealing the penal laws, and granting Catholics the right to bear arms, Britain laid the foundation for building a large recruitment base in Ireland.

However, the case studies demonstrate that the rapid militarisation implemented by Britain adversely affected the quality of these new Irish soldiers. Certain quick solutions favoured by the British and Irish governments, such as arming local loyalists rather than a formally established regiment, had much potential to go awry. Lack of training meant that men were often called upon to do duties they were unready or unfit for, and this in turn may explain the many cases of harsh and even extreme acts committed by the military in Ireland in the 1790s and in 1798 in particular. Cookson highlights the fact that both Pitt and Dundas had argued that 'military necessity was political argument of greatest importance and that armed mobilisation for the sake of home defence presented opportunities for reducing social tension and conflict.'¹¹ It may be concluded that the British government and military authorities weighed the balanced of these challenges and decided upon a strategy where more troops, even if they often lacked training, would help secure Ireland and overall British strategy.

Britain had lost its American colonies earlier in the century and was evidently determined to maintain its authority in its closest territorial possession. Unlike the French, the British had generally reliable intelligence, often from informers, that tracked the United Irishmen and the pro-Catholic Defenders. Overall, the British authorities took an active

¹¹ Cookson, *The British armed nation*, p. 156.

interest in securing Ireland; this may be regarded as a pragmatic agenda, and like France, Britain saw the advantages that Ireland offered; in Britain's case Ireland offered not only military manpower but also material supplies that could feed a hungry British population. When production was interrupted (such as when the corn harvest failed in 1799 and resulted in a small famine), the military was assigned to assist picking the potato harvest, while Cornwallis secured flour from Britain.¹² While the events of 1798 demonstrate that British authority in Ireland was not absolute, the fact that the vast majority of Irish soldiers remained resolutely loyal during this period of turmoil contradicts both the assumptions of the French and United Irishmen, as well as the misgivings of some British politicians.

British perceptions of Irish soldiers

In the early years of the wars, British opinion of Irish soldiers was divided. As Chapter 2 demonstrated, Irish soldiers in the regular army quickly developed a good reputation, in part due to the mixed nature of recruitment to the army, where regiments were rarely composed solely of English, Irish or Scottish recruits. Indeed, the mixed nature was said to have been an advantage to regimental morale, discipline and ability.¹³

In contrast, as the case studies have demonstrated, the home-defence regiments recruited almost exclusively from within Ireland. As a result, they lacked that mixed nature that characterised the regiments in the regular army, and the opinion of the militia, in particular, was considered by some to be unreliable and undisciplined. However, in the field, the militia defied expectation; there were no mass defections as some politicians feared and many United Irishmen hoped. In fact, the militia performed reasonably well in 1798, even before reinforcements arrived from Britain. After the rebellion the militia was not, as claimed by some, superseded by the yeomanry, and the case studies demonstrate that these

¹² Littlehales to officer commanding Donegal Militia and Lt. Gen. Dundas, 9 Nov. 1799 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/94); *Correspondence of Cornwallis*, iii, 144.

¹³ Denman, 'Hibernia officina militum', p. 166.

formations grew and continued to develop side-by-side.¹⁴ The militia was also crucial in supplying trained men for the line at the time of the Act of Union, a measure designed to win over Ascendancy commanders (who were also M.P.s) to support the union, as well as harness the vast manpower offered by the Catholic population of Ireland, illustrating how British military strategy and political manoeuvring were often closely intertwined.

While the militia and yeomanry were seen by military commanders as unreliable and amateur, the fencibles enjoyed a better reputation due to the fact that they were part of the regular army, raised just for the duration of the war. The 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry were an expression of Glentworth's loyalty to the British government, which he favoured over the Irish government and Irish affairs. However, this loyalty and high position in Ascendancy society did not translate into military ability. The 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry were plagued by discipline problems from the outset, and unlike the Donegal Militia, they did not seem to have officers with either the experience or ability to bring the men together in a cohesive unit. The qualities of the commander, rather than whether it was part of the regular army or a more amateur force, was what determined how a regiment performed and whether these Irishmen had more positive or more negative experiences during their service in the British military.

IMPACT OF POLITICS AND SOCIAL REFORM ON MILITARY LIFE

Another important question that was posed in the introduction was to what extent were Irish soldiers in the British army, serving within Ireland, affected by social reform and political manoeuvring during the wars? The case studies of the Irish Brigade and the Irish militia in particular indicate that social and political factors, influenced by the wider wars, greatly affected the experiences of the men in these formations.

¹⁴ Bartlett, 'Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion', p. 292.

The impact of Catholic relief on military life

The move for Catholic Relief in Ireland, which had begun to pick up pace in the latter half of the eighteenth-century, rapidly accelerated during the early years of the French Revolutionary wars, as the British government sought new solutions to the rising militarisation in Europe. The 1793 Catholic Relief Act, which amongst other reforms, allowed Catholics to bear arms once more, indicated a general willingness of the British authorities to improve rights for Catholics while also taking advantage of the large manpower pool that the Irish Catholic population offered. Concessions to Catholics would also subvert any attempts by radicals to gain general Catholic support for revolutionary activities, and redirect the traditional forms of Catholic military tradition, as was the case with the Irish Brigade in the British service. The competing views even within the British administration may be seen in the establishment of the new Irish Brigade; Fitzwilliam was interested in the symbolic gesture of good faith that was being offered to the émigré Franco-Irish officers and their fellow Catholic Irishmen, while Dundas and Portland saw the new brigade in more realistic and pragmatic terms. The strong opposition of the Ascendancy could be lessened by sending the brigade to the dangerous and unattractive duty of garrisoning the West Indian colonies. In a similar manner, by establishing the Irish militia as a mixed force, with a mostly Protestant officer corps, the formation was more acceptable to the Ascendancy. By allowing Catholics to enlist in the militia the Irish government was making a gesture of goodwill to Irish Catholics but, like the Irish Brigade, this gesture was framed by the practical needs of government more than by altruistic motives. Allowing Catholics to enlist in the militia provided a rapid boost to the Irish Establishment at exactly the time it was needed, securing Irish stability whilst allowing regular regiments to be sent overseas. The experiences of the men of Pitt's Irish Brigade demonstrate how Catholic Relief was still a contentious issue in British and Irish society at this time, and how British politicians were initially inclined to support the Irish Brigade when they saw the benefit to them.

While the ‘Catholic Question’ was one of the most contentious issues in Irish politics and society in the late eighteenth-century, there was not the same level of debate among English Catholics concerning enlistment, most likely due to their much smaller numbers, proportionally to the Protestant population of England. The Catholic Relief Acts of 1778 in Britain and Ireland had relaxed some of the penal laws but Catholics were still required to take an oath of allegiance to the crown.¹⁵ It is no coincidence that this relief act was brought in during the war in America. While the 1788 act had resulted in the violent Gordon Riots, the Catholic Relief Act passed in England in 1791 resulted in a relaxation of anti-Catholicism attitudes, and Britain offered a refuge to exiled Catholic priests, nuns and a general French Catholic diaspora.¹⁶ The rising level of militarisation increased Catholic recruitment and even resulted in the establishment of a Catholic chaplaincy in the British army; the first chaplain was appointed to the Glengarry Fencibles in 1794.¹⁷ Catholics in British regiments, after the Relief Act of 1791, also benefitted from the incoming French clergy.¹⁸ A generally positive attitude to Catholics helped secure their loyalty in the face of growing revolution across Europe.

By granting the franchise in 1793 to Irish Catholics a huge new electorate was opened up and by granting further relief, the British and Irish governments hoped to draw Catholic support to them and away from any radical or Whiggish Irish M.P.s that would otherwise have courted this new electorate. However, as seen in the case of the Irish Brigade, the British and Irish governments in the end chose to side with the Ascendancy to maintain stability. When the Act of Union was passed, the proposed Catholic Emancipation that was hoped to follow it was dropped, due to the opposition of the king and others, including many of the Irish Ascendancy. This in turn prompted the collapse of Pitt’s long-running administration, an indication that the Catholic Question and political manoeuvring was a

¹⁵ Michael Mullet, *Catholics in Britain and Ireland, 1558-1829* (London, 1998), p. 181.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 138, 151.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

very difficult subject to tackle during a war, even for seasoned Westminster politicians. Valone and Bradbury argue that while the union meant that ‘a new political affiliation was open to all members of Irish society,’ Ireland still suffered an increase in ‘famine, economic depression and agrarian violence.’¹⁹ The experiences of the Irishmen in the case studies demonstrate how the Catholic Question was something that British politicians sometimes used for wider objectives; establishing a Catholic Irish Brigade to secure overseas possessions, or establishing a mostly Catholic militia in order to free up regulars for overseas service. It would be many more years before full Catholic Emancipation was granted, but as this thesis has demonstrated the real beginning of this process may be seen in the events of the 1790s, in particular concerning Irish Catholic enlistment to the British military. British politicians recognised the importance of improving relations with Irish Catholics, especially during a war that threatened the stability of Europe.

The mixing of politics and the military in Irish units in the British service

This thesis has also highlighted the close linkages between Irish politics and military service were in late eighteenth-century Ireland. British officers, serving in the regular army and often overseas, were less politicised than the Irish officers who retained their civilian lives and duties, dividing their time (not always successfully) between leading their men and attending parliament. As the case studies of the Donegal Militia, the Doneraile Yeomanry and the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry, have shown, the senior officers were often absent due to political and sometimes judicial demands and this had the potential to adversely affect unit cohesion and development.

All of these regiments had a commander who, regardless of affiliation, was heavily involved in politics and therefore wielded a level of influence. The Irish Brigade, conversely, lacked any overall commander, let alone one with this political influence and as such, there

¹⁹ Jill Marie Bradbury and David A. Valone, ‘Introduction’, in David A. Valone and Jill Marie Bradbury (eds), *Anglo-Irish identities, 1571-1845* (Cranbury, NJ, 2008), pp 11-29, at p. 21.

was nobody to champion them in the political sphere, enabling the distrust of the Ascendancy to determine the fate of the brigade. Interestingly, Colonel Henry Dillon, after his time in the Irish Brigade, converted to Protestantism in order to stand for election and become an M.P.

The contrast between the Irish Brigade's experiences and the other case studies illustrates that although the mixing of politics and military affairs had the potential to lead to problems with discipline and unit cohesion, the alternative of a commander who lacked this political influence may not have proved advantageous to the experience of the men either. In some cases the commanders could and did use their political influence to benefit their men, such as Conyngham's application for the 'Prince of Wales' honorific, which no doubt aided morale and an improved esprit du corps. Similarly, Doneraile, despite being nominally a private in his yeomanry corps, successfully applied to the Lord Lieutenant, for the unit to be augmented, no doubt due to his political and social status.

The political affiliation of the commander also had a bearing on the experiences of the men he commanded, as this impacted on the extent of both the commander's influence and potential civilian responsibilities. For example, Glentworth was a strong supporter of the government and even a member of the Privy Council. These duties may have distracted him from his military responsibilities and contributed to the lack of leadership suffered by his regiment.

This thesis has also demonstrated the prevalence of patronage in the appointment of commanders at this time; the Lord Lieutenant signed the commissions of the militia commanders who, in turn, would be expected to behave favourably towards government and not cause problems in the Irish parliament nor involve the men under their command in political affairs, as had happened with the Volunteers. The same expectations were made clear to the colonels of the former Irish Brigade. The offer letter they received explicitly mention both the 'affection and confidence' of the king and his government, but also the

expectation that they displayed ‘good behaviour. The consequences for those who did not meet this expectation could be extreme, as evidenced by Downshire’s dismissal from command, after involving his militia regiment in his own political opposition to the Union. The replacement of Conyngham, a Conservative, with Clements, a Whig, indicates that the political affiliation of the commander was not necessarily of concern to the authorities; as long as the commander was not too extreme in his views.

‘IRISH’ IDENTITY IN IRISH UNITS IN THE BRITISH SERVICE

The union of Irish identities in the British service

The official inclusion of Irish Catholics into what had been, officially at least, a strictly Protestant military poses another question; did a clash of identities pose an issue for these Irishmen in the British service within Ireland, with Catholics occupying most of the rank and file under a mostly Protestant officer command structure? The answer to this varies depending on formation, and even on a unit-by-unit basis. The British regular army, due to the multi-national approach to its recruitment, became a place where English, Irish and Scottish soldiers could serve together with little trouble, as the army provided a common ground for the men to serve together in the defence of the British Isles and for their king. The union of identities in the regulars was seen as an advantage to commanders, but the more singular identity of some of the other formations, as seen in the case studies, presented challenges.

The Irish Brigade did not experience a clash of identities within itself, as it was purely Catholic, but a clear clash of Franco-Irish Catholic and Protestant Ascendancy identities resulted in the brigade being used in a manner that appeased Protestant sensitivities whilst condemning most of the men to death by tropical disease. The other case studies illustrate that such an extreme clash of identity was rare, and that most of the formations offered a place where Catholic and Protestant identities, as well as upper and lower class

identities, could come together under a common goal, the defence of Ireland from external invasion and internal insurrection. The orders issued forbidding the forming of Orange Lodges within regiments in Bandon for example, also indicates that the British authorities wished to avoid any sectarian instability. The structure of the Irish militia reflected Irish society at large, Protestant officers commanding mostly Catholic enlisted men, but any problems that arose were usually due to individual commanders rather than an overall clash of identities. As the case studies demonstrate, the instilling of regimental pride was something designed to bring the men together, regardless of the religion. The pageantry of military life was another aspect that the regiments in Ireland took very seriously, as shown by the extensive efforts on the subject by the militia and yeomanry commanders, something that not only improved unit morale but also improved, in their opinion, their standing in society.

However, some regiments came together better than others. The case study of the Donegal Militia illustrates that this formation was a place where Catholic and Protestant identities could come together, united by regimental pride and the good leadership (not to mention military experience) of Conyngham. When Conyngham died, his successor Clements also maintained good relations with his men and, despite a lack of military experience, demonstrated a similar quality of leadership. The leadership and tactical ability of their second-in-command, Maxwell, meant that, when pressed, the men of the Donegal Militia retained their discipline and cohesion in 1798. Conversely, the lack of ability displayed by Glentworth and his officers meant that the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry suffered numerous discipline problems, culminating in the execution of a number of troopers for disaffection, despite their closer association with the regular army (and therefore assumed superiority) and overall association with a higher social class than other regiments.

The behaviour of the senior officers influenced how the men under them behaved; brutal officers such as Captain Swayne of the North Cork Militia encouraged harsh treatment of civilians and suspected rebels whilst the leadership qualities of Maxwell or Fingall meant

that the men under their command restrained themselves, even in the violence of 1798.

Therefore it may be concluded that the character of the commanding officer played a vital role in how the unit performed, and how they experienced the war; under a good commander differences in religion or social identities prior to enlisting would be surpassed by loyalty to their comrades and commander, and a new, shared sense of identity as ‘British and Irish soldiers’, as the garrison order in Bandon refers to.

The military as an analogue to Irish society

The case studies have also highlighted how the military structure in Ireland mirrored that of Irish society, with mostly Protestant officers commanding mostly Catholic rank-and-file. The perception of a simple Catholic/Protestant divide in eighteenth-century Ireland appears to have been less entrenched than may have been perceived by subsequent scholarship of Irish history. The case studies have further demonstrated, the Irish military, like Irish society, was not so strictly divided as it initially appears, with many Protestants sharing the lower and middle ranks with Catholics, and some Catholics maintaining a presence in the higher echelons of the military (yet still excluded from general rank). Glentworth was a staunch Protestant and member of the Ascendancy, yet did not succeed as a fencible commander, while Fingall was a Catholic who campaigned for further Catholic Relief, yet was also a major landowner and a successful commander of a yeomanry corps, noted as a ‘zealous and faithful subject of the Crown.’ Conversely, most of the United Irish leadership, including Tone, were Protestant, indicating that Protestantism did not necessarily equate with concepts of ‘Britishness’ or closeness to the British crown.

These examples illustrate how religion was not the defining characteristic of a person’s position in society, or their perceived loyalty. Wealth and influence, most often manifested in the form of land ownership, was the key factor that determined a person’s position in society, rather than the person’s belief. As Hill has highlighted, the term ‘Papist’ was a much more derogatory term for Catholics and clear distinctions were often made

between the better and lesser types of Catholic.²⁰ However, in the case studies, the Catholic soldiers are simply referred to as Catholic, and the term Papist is not used, which indicates that those Catholics who enlisted in the British service, whether to defend Ireland or serve overseas, were generally regarded in a positive manner. There were of course exceptions; Lieutenant-General Sir James Craig complained of the behaviour of the 100th (Prince Regent's County of Dublin) Regiment of Foot stationed in Upper Canada in 1810, claiming that the men frequently deserted or were insubordinate, as they were 'not well officered' and 'the men are nearly to a man Papists.'²¹ However, as the Irish Catholic contribution to the British military increased, and they served alongside English, Scottish and Welsh regiments, the older anti-Catholic attitudes began to recede, and the complex identity of the Irish soldier took its place alongside the wider British military tradition.

The role of the Protestant defence tradition

Another point raised earlier in this thesis was the relevance of the Protestant defence tradition within the context of Irish militarisation during the wars. The British government recognised that Ascendancy enthusiasm for armed service, previously seen in the destabilising Irish Volunteers, could be properly directed in the Irish militia. However, the militia had initially been quite mistrusted, and indeed considered 'ripe for revolt' due to its Catholic majority and amateur nature. Therefore, the Irish yeomanry was formed as a response to this initial dissatisfaction with the militia, and also to harness the enthusiasm of those who wished to proclaim their loyalty to government. The initial offers to establish armed groups of men of 'good and loyal' principles demonstrate how the yeomanry was conceived as a dependable local defence force. Many of the commanders examined in the case studies had long family traditions of military service. Conversely, Clements did not

²⁰ Hill, 'National festivals, the state and 'Protestant Ascendancy'', p. 38.

²¹ Extract of a letter from Lt. Gen. Craig to the Adj. Gen., Quebec, 8 June 1810 (T.N.A., W.O., 1/644/499-500).

have a family tradition of military service, his family being relative newcomers to the Ascendancy, but his military service would have increased his personal and family prestige.

LOYALISM, NATIONALISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN IRISH UNITS IN THE BRITISH SERVICE

The influence of loyalism on military life

All the units examined in the case studies have a common characteristic; the wish of their commanders to display their loyalty to the crown, and indeed this expression of loyalty was often the main characteristic highlighted by prospective commanders. Jocelyn and his senior fencible officers offered to serve without pay, as a gesture of to ‘attachment to the government and constitution,’ of Ireland, and Glentworth similarly raised a regiment to display not only his loyalty but also his high status in Irish society.

Of less importance, it seems, was the actual military ability of the commanders and their men, and the many offers to raise regiments to defend Ireland during the wars were framed in terms of loyalty rather than in terms of experiences and a willingness to serve in the greater war effort. Some commanders, such as Doneraile and Glentworth, lacked any real military experiences and had to rely on their reputation as Ascendancy noblemen but others, such as Conyngham, did possess practical military experience, which benefitted the men who served under them. The officers of the former Irish Brigade offered both loyalty and military experience to Pitt’s administration, and made this point directly in their offer to serve, yet fell afoul of political manoeuvring between Westminster and the Ascendancy. Whether a regiment was part of the regulars, such as the 2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry, or part of the amateur defence forces, such as the Donegal Militia; the most important factors determining the experiences of the men were the leadership qualities of the commanding officers and the political/social identity of the formation.

It may be inferred that Britain, having recently lost its American possessions and fearing the spread of revolution from France, placed a higher value on loyalty rather than ability in their military, at least in a potentially unstable Ireland. This trust that the British government and military commanders placed in the promises of loyalty by Irish gentlemen, who often lacked any formal training, to raise and train a regiment, was a gamble that had the potential to have serious negative consequences. The demand for a rapid augmentation to the Irish Establishment meant that the government rushed the raising of troops, and in particular the yeomanry corps, sometimes even just arming the civilians that they deemed to be loyal. Rising militarisation across Europe was forcing the British and Irish governments to take advantage of any offers they could receive. As the case studies have demonstrated, loyalty did not automatically mean that the regiment or corps would be a success; the militarily inexperienced Glentworth's regiment suffered considerable discipline problems throughout its existence while the experienced Conyngham formed a cohesive and trained regiment that did not falter in 1798. Officers and men who displayed extreme or reckless behaviour had the potential to be just as destabilising to the wider war effort as any revolutionary group or movement. As seen in the comparison between the Irish militia and the English Militia, both formations had their difficulties, yet both performed reasonably well when led by good and experienced officers (which both formations often lacked).

While loyalism may be most closely associated with the Ascendancy, their lower-order fellow Protestants and organisations such as the Orange Order, the loyalty that most Irish Catholic soldiers displayed during the 1790s indicates a willingness to serve as part of the British military while maintaining a sense of regimental and national pride. While the Irish yeomanry were most closely associated with Protestant loyalism, the cases of Fingall and his mostly Catholic corps demonstrate that loyalty was not religiously exclusive but inclusive. Fingall was a campaigner for Catholic rights yet he still commanded a yeomanry corps that took part in the repression of the rebellion, displaying simultaneously the value of Catholic soldiers and the loyalty they could display to government, given the chance. This is

mirrored at a higher level by Fitzwilliam's desire to give the Catholics of Ireland a 'fair chance' and even his successor Camden's desire to avoid sectarian violence between Catholics and Presbyterians in Armagh. At a time when revolution and war was sweeping the Americas and Europe, British politicians and commanders evidently valued loyalty over a soldier's particular religious persuasion. However, by focusing on loyalty over ability the British and Irish authorities contributed to a situation where untrained yet armed loyalists heightened political, social and sectarian tensions rather than stabilise them, and it may be reasoned that this was a significant factor in the breakdown of events in 1798. Whether a regiments or formation was considered to be particularly loyal or not did not impact how it performed in combat, the key factor was the leadership ability, and potential experience, of the commanding officer.

Irish military service as an expression of nationalism

This conclusion leads on to another topic examined in the introduction; was Irish military service an expression of nationalism? The introduction of this thesis defined as the active promotion of the concept of a nation by a group from that nation, and the numerous Irish regiments that were raised for the defence of Ireland may be seen as an expression of this Irish nationalism. Unlike the later nineteenth-century concept of nationalism, this eighteenth-century Irish nationalism did not seek to sever its ties with Britain, but sought to improve the status of Ireland within the larger structure of the United Kingdom and the emerging British Empire. The regimental pride described above, while essential for forming a cohesive and disciplined unit, was also used to bind these men from varying backgrounds and identities together as Irishmen defending Ireland. Official communications and private letters from British politicians praised the behaviour of the Irish militia and yeomanry, commending their 'zeal and patriotism' and enthusiasm for service to their sovereign and country, while the Irish Brigade were also praised for their 'unshaken loyalty.'

The concept of patriotism may also have been more associated with rebels, as well as the Irish Patriots in the Irish parliament, but the experiences of the Irishmen in the British service during the French Revolutionary wars show a distinct sense of national identity, and even national pride, as Irish soldiers defending Ireland. Economic factors certainly was an influence for the common Irishmen to enlist but an overall sense of pride, from the regimental to the national level, also brought these men together, Protestant and Catholic, rich and poor. This was proven by the fact that the Irish Establishment held together in 1798 and did not disintegrate as the rebels had hoped and the government had feared. There were no mass defections of the militia, and many regiments such as the Donegal Militia held together well and successfully counter-attacked. The militia regiments who broke when faced with the French at Castlebar did not deserve the subsequent harsh criticism, as they were the chosen scapegoats for the defeat.²² Despite the mistrust the amateur forces in Ireland were held in, it is significant to note that after the rebellion the 5th (Irish) Dragoons were the only regiment disbanded for their ‘insubordination, and departure from discipline and the principles that have ever distinguished the British army,’ and to serve as an example of the zero-tolerance to indiscipline in a time of war.²³

The rising militarisation of Europe, and the corresponding demands placed on the British and Irish governments, which in turn affected the Irish Establishment. As McAnally states, ‘few, if any of the forces in Ireland, whether regular, militia, fencible or other could be said to be well equipped.’²⁴ Manpower demands resulted in difficulties in recruitment, as seen in the cases of the Donegal Militia and Irish Brigade, and were mirrored by recruitment difficulties encountered by English regiments sent to Ireland to recruit.²⁵ The reliability of the common Irish soldiers was displayed emphatically in 1798, despite the scepticism of British officers and the hopes of the United Irishmen and their French allies. The Irish

²² McAnally, ‘The government forces engaged at Castlebar in 1798’, pp 330-1.

²³ Lt. Gen. Henry Calvert to Maj. Gen. Fox, 9 Apr. 1799 (T.N.A., W.O., 68/222/33).

²⁴ McAnally, ‘The government forces engaged at Castlebar in 1798’, p. 330.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 323-4.

soldier had gone from being an untrustworthy and undisciplined mercenary, willing to sell his sword to the highest bidder on the Continent, to becoming a fully accepted member of the British military system.

QUESTIONS OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

As the introduction to this thesis, and the chapter examining the Irish in the regular army, highlighted, the question of historiography is very important when examining the history of Ireland, in any period but especially the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries. The literature has been dominated by a focus on the traditional forms of Irish nationalism and patriotism; Wolfe Tone, the United Irishmen, the tragic bloodshed of 1798 and the failure of French assistance. However, as this thesis has demonstrated, Irish involvement in the British service was a major part of life in Ireland during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, with large numbers of men enlisting in the various formations raised to defend Ireland, and this in turn affected the rest of the population, in terms of greater employment opportunities, improved infrastructure in places and a general boost to the economy provided by such a large military garrison.

The importance of the Irish in the British service during the wars, and the varying experiences of these men, deserves more attention than they have been given. The main reason for this has been the cultural amnesia that has dominated Irish society since independence from Britain, and the concept of 'Irish' being framed as 'not-British.' In the early years of independence, armed nationalism, as well as the less aggressive politics of reformers such as Daniel O'Connell, became the focus of Irish historiography and even the educational curriculum, and it is unsurprising that there is very little popular knowledge of Irish participation in the British military during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. The Wild Geese tradition also received much attention in the nineteenth century, despite the fact that the number of Catholic Irishmen who actually emigrated had dropped

significantly during the eighteenth, while the number of Catholic Irishmen who enlisted in the British army had risen steadily, especially after the relief acts of the 1790s.

In recent years there has been an increase in awareness of the Irish in the British army during the First World War, with historians such as Jeffery, Murphy and Horne doing much to accomplish this.²⁶ In May 2013 the Irish Minister of Defence, Alan Shatter, announced plans to pardon the 5,000 Irishmen who left the Irish Defence forces without permission during the Second World War, in order to join the British army.²⁷ Prior to this they had been branded deserters and refused state jobs or welfare, and this initiative indicates a growing acceptance of Irish contribution to the British military.²⁸ However, light also needs to be shed on Irish involvement in the British military in other periods, particular in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, as this is arguably where the tradition of Irish service in the British armed forces begins. The Irish military tradition has often been in framed in terms of the move towards independence, rather than acknowledging another aspect of Irish military tradition, one that developed alongside the British military tradition and as the nineteenth-century progressed, within a larger imperial tradition.

While this may have been a difficult topic for some to accept before, modern objective historiography must be constantly applied to what is an overlooked topic in the broad scope of Irish history. The period from 1916 to 1922 draws much of the attention, both of academics and the general public; a greater awareness of Irish military history and its relationship to British military history, will facilitate a better understanding of Irish history in general, and in particular a better understanding of the Ireland that came before independence in the early twentieth century. While revisionism has questioned the historiography of the 1916-1922 period, and reignited a debate about those turbulent years,

²⁶ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2000); David Murphy, *Irish regiments in the World Wars* (Oxford, 2007); John Horne (ed.), *Our war: Ireland and the Great War* (Dublin, 2008).

²⁷ *Irish Independent*, 7 May 2013.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

the same must be applied to the historiography of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, and in particular Ireland's relationship with its military tradition within the British service. While the Irish 'patriots' who fought against British rule between the eighteenth and twentieth-centuries undeniable had a major influence on Irish history, this thesis has demonstrated that there was another aspect of Irish patriotism and military tradition that has largely been overlooked in recent times, a tradition that deserves more recognition and attention, in order to better understand the complex and often challenging nature of Irish history.

As the aim of this thesis was to examine the experiences of Irishmen in the British service, and how the wars influenced these experiences, the regiments serving within Ireland were selected for case-studies as they were most directly influenced by both international and domestic factors. The Irish Brigade was also selected as it not only represented the change of military tradition from the French to British service, but also represented how the experiences of Irishmen in the British service were also heavily influenced by the social and political changes in Ireland, Britain and Europe. Conversely, the Irish regiments in the regular army were less influenced by domestic affairs as they were usually quickly shipped out for service overseas. Nevertheless their experiences are important when considering Irish involvement in the British military as a whole. Catholic recruitment to the army had taken place covertly for most of the eighteenth century, and in the 1790s this tradition came out into the open. As possible future research topics, the Irish in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines would benefit from further research, even if there were not 'Irish' ships in the same way that there were 'Irish' regiments.

The case of Scotland within the United Kingdom provides an interesting comparison to the case of Ireland. Scotland, despite having a small population in relation to the rest of the United Kingdom (10% in 1811), proportionately contributed a significant amount to the

British military.²⁹ As in Ireland, Scottish security was mostly in the hands of a Scottish force, initially in the form of fencible regiments and later with the addition of the Scottish militia.³⁰ Cookson argues that this contributed ‘enormously to the retrieval of Scottish nationhood.’³¹ When there were disturbances over the establishment of the Scottish militia, the Scottish fencibles, volunteers and yeomanry were able to quell resistance without much trouble.³² By the time of the French Revolutionary wars the Jacobite Cause, along with the last of the ‘Pretenders,’ was dead and the last rebellion was over half a century ago. Scotland did not have such a volatile political, social and religious mix of identities as Ireland still had, and therefore Scottish regiments had easily integrated into the British military structure. Irish regiments would also integrate successfully as the French Revolutionary wars progressed but the unstable situation at home remained.

LEGACY OF IRISH SERVICE IN THE BRITISH ARMY DURING THE WARS

This thesis has demonstrated that the French Revolutionary wars may be viewed as the birthplace of the tradition of Irish service in the British armed forces. The case of the Irish Brigade in the British service demonstrates not only the changing attitudes of the British authorities towards Irish Catholics, but also how Irish military tradition was becoming more associated with the British, rather than French, military. The Irish Brigade in the British service was the last act of the original Wild Geese tradition, and its ignominious end may be explained by the shifting of the Irish military tradition from the French service to the British service. This process had begun much earlier in the eighteenth century, as Irish Catholics emigrated in less and less numbers after the initial period of mass migration in the 1690s. While the tradition of Catholic military emigration waned considerably, Catholic recruitment

²⁹ Cookson, *The British armed nation*, p. 127.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

to the British service grew steadily over the course of the century. As seen in the chapter on the Irish in the regular army, Catholic recruitment had quickly become a tool to be utilised in times of need, such as during the American War of Independence, albeit covertly and without being officially acknowledged. Nevertheless, the precedence for future official recruitment was set.

The Franco-Irish military tradition did not completely disappear, but the Wild Geese tradition was certainly at an end. An Irish legion was raised as part of French army during the Napoleonic wars but this had little to do with the old Irish Brigades, made up as it was of mostly exiled United Irishmen and various foreign troops.³³ Similarly, Irish contribution to the French army during the Franco-Prussian war, in the form of an Irish Ambulance, was motivated by Irish nationalists' desire to defy Britain and support France, rather than due to any long-established Franco-Irish military tradition.³⁴

The changing attitudes of society in Britain and Ireland, exemplified by the granting of Catholic Relief and the right to bear arms and the subsequent Irish militia Act indicates that Irish Catholic inclusion, rather than exclusion was more useful to the British government and military. While there were still members of the Protestant Ascendancy who resisted this inclusion, such as Doneraile and Glentworth, as well as purely sectarian officers such as Swayne, there were many who were willing to serve alongside Catholics. Likewise, these Catholic soldiers were also willing to serve in the British military alongside Protestants, demonstrating that the transfer of the Irish military tradition was most likely facilitated by the fostering of regimental and national pride, and that religious differences did not pose serious problems. This is further reinforced by the fact that Catholic soldiers on the Irish Establishment did not defect en masse to the rebels in 1798, and any defections or desertions that took place were on an individual or small group basis. By urging the garrison at Bandon

³³ Dunne-Lynch, 'The Irish Legion of Napoleon', pp 189-218.

³⁴ Janick Juliennne, 'The Irish and the Franco-Prussian war: hopes and disappointments' in Genet-Rouffiac and Murphy, *Franco-Irish military connections* (Dublin, 2009), pp 219-37.

to never forget that they were British and Irish soldiers, it may be concluded that the Irish military identity was able to find a home within, and alongside, the British military identity, and that to be Irish and to be British was not necessarily mutually exclusive. This may be seen most clearly in the attitudes of Ascendancy officers who wished to continue their familial tradition of armed loyalism but also in the newer Irish Catholic soldiers who joined up and served in the defence of Ireland, united with Protestants under the overall concept of Irishmen defending Ireland.

This transfer of Irish military tradition from the French to British service, and the success of Irish regiments in the defence of Ireland, set the precedent for a greater Irish involvement in the British military in general. While this thesis has focused on Irishmen in the British service within Ireland, the Irish regiments in the regular British army were to earn themselves a worthy reputation in the final years of the Revolutionary Wars and in the coming Napoleonic wars. The United Kingdom army of English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh regiments fought together successfully at Aboukir and Alexandria in 1801, bringing Napoleon's Egyptian expedition to an end and demonstrating the British army was able to defeat a French army in the field.³⁵ The reputation of the Irish regiments was further enhanced in the Peninsular War under Wellington. These were a mix of new regiments, raised in 1793 at the outbreak of the wars, and older regiments that had existed since the Williamite Wars. These regiments, composed of Catholics and Protestants alike, many having seen service in the Irish militia in the 1790s, provided an important contribution to the success of Wellington's campaign and their fighting ability, if not necessarily their discipline, earned them respect from British commanders.

This success of Irish involvement in the wars of 1793-1815 set the precedent for continued Irish service in later conflicts of the Victorian period, with Irish regiments serving in the Crimea, in India, South Africa and in other colonial wars across the British Empire.

³⁵ Mallinson, *The making of the British army*, pp 140-4.

The Ascendancy tradition of military service, which greatly influenced the establishment of the militia and yeomanry, continued in the nineteenth-century; the many Ascendancy Anglo-Irish men who rose to prominence in the British military, demonstrated once more that the Irish military tradition was not restricted to hardy Catholic peasants-turned-soldiers. The enthusiasm for the pageantry of military life, as seen in the militia and yeomanry, continued to develop throughout the nineteenth-century, an Irish military pageantry within the broader British Imperial military pageantry. Even when armed nationalism returned to the fore in Ireland in the early twentieth century, the Irish regiments, just like in 1798, remained loyal to the military community they had joined rather than desert or defect en masse. The praise of politicians and commanders in the 1790s for the loyalty and good service of Irish soldiers indicates a general acceptance of the Irish military tradition within the British service, undoubtedly laying the foundation for the success of later Irish service in the British military in the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries.

It is interesting to note how the Irish participation in the British military during the First World War has recently been reassessed, after almost a century of neglect. During the early years of independence the Irish Free State and subsequent Irish Republic focused solely on the nationalist history of Ireland, celebrating figure such as Tone, Emmet, Pearse and Collins. The formative years of independence did not witness any kind of commemoration of the Irishmen who had served in the British military and even as recent as 1998, the bicentenary of the 1798 rebellion witnessed once more a historiographical approach that heavily focused on Tone, the United Irishmen and brave rebel pikemen. As mentioned previously, it was not until the early 21st century that any formal commemoration of the Irish in the First World War took place. This objective acceptance of the past, acknowledging the good and the bad, has progressed further with British recognition of not only the Irish who served in their military but also, in the state visit of Queen Elisabeth II to the Republic of Ireland in 2011, a recognition of the Irish who fought for independence from Great Britain. The highly symbolic visit included a wreath laying ceremony at the Irish Garden of

Remembrance in Dublin, dedicated to those who fought for Irish freedom.³⁶ The history of the Irishmen who fought and died for Britain and Ireland has faded from public memory, as historiography deliberately focused on nationalist aspects and allowed the memory of the Irish military tradition, as part of the British military tradition to become forgotten. As the centenary of many important events in the War of Independence and subsequent Civil War approaches, the so-called 'Decade of Commemorations,' we must also look further back, and remember how this tradition of the Irish soldier in the British service began, and how the Irish identity, complicated and multi-faceted as it may be, developed.

This challenging question of what constituted 'Irishness' is something that will always be debated, but this thesis has demonstrated that the Irish soldier in the British service reflects the larger picture of Irish-British history of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries. To be 'Irish' was not simply to be a poor Catholic soldier who enlisted due to lack of any other choices, nor simply an ambitious Ascendancy nobleman who wished to profess his loyalty and family tradition of military service. To define the Irish soldier as a single identity would be a mistake; the Irish soldier encompassed a range of personalities, loyalties, beliefs, traditions and motivations. This complex range of identities came together in the British service, and these Irishmen began a proud tradition that would last for over a century.

³⁶ *Irish Times*, 17 May 2011.

APPENDIX 1

EFFECTIVE STRENGTH OF THE BRITISH ARMY, 1793-1802

Based on 'Return of the effective men in the British army from the 1st January 1793 to the 1st January 1806, Adj. Gen. Office, 17 Dec. 1806' (T.N.A., W.O., 1/903/f33).

Year	Location	Cavalry		Foot Guards	Infantry		Total	Militia
		Regulars	Fencibles		Regulars	Fencibles		
1793	Britain	2644		2885	5464		10993	8450
	Ireland	1510			8134		9644	
	Abroad	527			17781		18308	
	Total	4681		2885	31379		38945	8450
1794	Britain	4517		2878	7888	5368	20657	30330
	Ireland	2441			8087		10528	9627
	Abroad	7569		3225	43124		53918	
	Total	14527		6103	59099	5368	85097	39957
1795	Britain	7694	4657	2674	20942	6714	42681	34235
	Ireland	2715	300		6126	537	9678	12847
	Abroad	8444		3407	59626	426	71903	
	Total	18853	4957	6081	86694	7677	124262	47082
1796	Britain	9429	6810	5390	9763	12567	43959	34926
	Ireland	2296	508		1480	10210	14494	17162
	Abroad	856			52140	547	53543	
	Total	12581	7318	5390	63383	23324	111996	52088
1797	Britain	7701	6638	5480	10097	11269	41185	36100
	Ireland	3640	664		1699	9085	15088	18188
	Abroad	2958			45112	519	48589	
	Total	14299	7302	5480	56908	20873	104862	54288

<i>Year</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Cavalry</i>		<i>Foot Guards</i>	<i>Infantry</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Militia</i>
		<i>Regulars</i>	<i>Fencibles</i>		<i>Regulars</i>	<i>Fencibles</i>		
1798	Britain	8238	5588	5797	13883	8268	41774	36339
	Ireland	3957	1820		1812	10788	18377	22358
	Abroad	3633			38779		42412	
	Total	15828	7408	5797	54474	19056	102563	58697
1799	Britain	9381	5591	6447	14078	6195	41692	73333
	Ireland	4151	3139	1860	5571	13516	28237	32583
	Abroad	3847			41450		45323	
	Total	17405	8730	8307	61099	19711	115252	105916
1800	Britain	12261	8191	7927	38802	5061	72242	37779
	Ireland	1742	3738		2657	16823	24960	25542
	Abroad	3657			39945		43596	
	Total	17654	11929	7927	81404	21884	140798	63321
1801	Britain	15279		8734	17521	2341	43875	40091
	Ireland	4121			13470	15992	33583	20540
	Abroad	3778			66162	2467	72407	
	Total	23178		8734	97153	20800	149865	60631
1802	Britain	16749		8504	24162	2374	51789	47624
	Ireland	3990			10407	14827	29224	25245
	Abroad	4403			68880	3699	76982	
	Total	25142		8504	103449	20900	157995	72869

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF SENIOR OFFICERS IN CASE STUDIES

The Irish Brigade in the British service

1st Regiment: Jacques Charles de Fitzjames, Duc de Fitzjames.

2nd Regiment: Comte Antoine Walsh de Serrant.

3rd Regiment: Chevalier Henry Dillon.

4th Regiment: Comte Daniel Charles O'Connell.

5th Regiment: Comte Thomas Conway, Vicomte Charles Walsh de Serrant (after 1795).

6th Regiment: James Henry Conway (Comte de Conway after 1795).

The Prince of Wales' Donegal Regiment of Militia

Colonel: (Right Honourable) William Burton Conyngham (1793-6).

Colonel: Nathaniel Clements, Viscount Clements and 2nd Ear of Leitrim (1796-1802).

Lieutenant-colonel: Richard Maxwell.

Doneraile Yeomanry Corps

Captain: Nicholas G. Evans

Lieutenants: Robert Crone and John Grove White

Private: Hayes St. Leger, 2nd Viscount Doneraile.

2nd Irish Fencible Cavalry

Colonel: Edmond Henry Pery, Lord Glentworth.

Lieutenant-colonel: William Thomas Monsell.

APPENDIX 3

LIST OF IRISH YEOMANRY CORPS, COUNTY BY COUNTY, 1803

Based on *List of the volunteers and yeomanry corps of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1804). Please note that this is a transcription and the original spelling of place names is preserved, which may differ from the modern spelling.

Yeomanry				Supplementary Yeomanry		
County	Cavalry	Infantry		Cavalry	Infantry	
Antrim		Ratharkin and Finvoy	Giant's Causeway	Loyal Donongore	Derriaghy Lisburn Ballymagary Beardville Malone	
		Ratharkin	Pollglass			
	Lisburn	Derriaghy	Dunluce			
	Magheral	Ballymacash	Glenavy			
	Dunseverick	Soldierstown	Templepatrick			
	Carrickfergus	Brookhill	Larne			
	Carey	Lisburn	Ballymena			
	Belfast	Glenarm	Braid Island			
	Portglenore	Antrim	Connor and Haffordstown			
	Greenmount	Ballinderry	Killead			
		Belfast (4 companies)	Ballymoney			
		Carrickfergus	Belfast Merchants			
		Loughneagh	Magheramore			
		Loyal Donangore	Culfaghtrin			
		Belfast Royal	Falls			
		Belvoir	Belfast Volunteers			
	Randalstown	Ahoghill				
	Moneyglass	Clough				
	Broomhedge	Grange				
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps	
Armagh		Churchill	Mullyglass		Armagh	
		Markethill	Crewhill			
		Neighbourhood of Armagh	Summer Island			Tandragee
		Armagh	Seagoe			Creggan
		Upper Qrier	Ardress			Keady
		Tandragee	Lurgan			Porttadown
		Killevy				

County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Carlow	Carlow Cloydagh and Killesken Carlow Loyal Rathvilly Loyal Tullow	Leighlin Brigde Broomville Tullow Borris Carlow	Ballynockan Mt. Leinster Bagnelstown Carlow		
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Cavan	Ballyconnell Killishandra Ballyhaise Ballymacue Kilmore Belturbet Ashfield	Tullyhunca Crossdonny Cavan Killishandra Bally haise 1 st Ballyjamesduff 2 nd Ballyjamesduff Belturbet Ballintemple Swanlinbar Castle Sauderson	Killenkere Cootehill Clonmahon Redhills Fortland Ballyconnell Shercock Largay Rakenny Scrabby Kingscourt		Kingscourt
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Clare	Killkishen Ennis Kilrush Newgrove Donass and Broadford Traderee Killaloe Tomgrany Kilnow Loyal Clifden	Kilrush Killaloe Garriosn Ennis Newmarket			
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Cork County	Imokilly Bandon Kinsale Kinnattaloon Milstreet Bantry Barrymore Doneraile Muskerry Legion (2 troops) Mitchelstown Kinalea and Kerrycurshy Clonakilty Mallow Longueville Kilworth Ross Carberry	Mallow Boyne Bandon Union Cove Passage Union Ibane and Barryroe Bandon Boyne Middleton Kinsale (2 companies) Youghal (2 companies) Cloyne Berehaven Castelmartyr Innishannon Charleville Dromore Bantry	Oyster Haven Brinny Macroome Dunmanaway Kilmeen West Carbery Crookhaven Muskerry Waterfall Skull Monkstown Ballahaneen Balrney Castletown Roche Roberts Cove Glanmire	Doneraile Association Blarney Glanmire Rosstillan Ovens Union Dunmanaway Castle Hyde Leskue and Abeymahon	Mallow Garrison Innishannon Duhallow

	Court McSherrt West Carberry	Castle Hyde Crosshaven Castle Lyons East Carberry	Bandon True Blue Drumkeen Ross Carbery and Baltimore Legion (2 companies)		
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Cork City	Cork Volunteers (3 companies) Cork Legion (3 legions)	Cork Volunteers (7 companies) Cork Legion (6 companies)			
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Donegal	Raphoe Tyrhugh Ballyshannon Letterkenny Mallin Burt Loyal Erne Loyal Finwater Dunfanaghy Mount Charles Moville Buncrana	Culdaff Ardara Rathmullen Burleigh and Orwell Ramelton (2 companies) Raphoe (2 companies) Millford Rangers Killegordon		Raphoe	Ramelton Greenhill Castlefinn Lifford St. Jownston
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Down	Lower Iveagh (2 troops) Narrowwater Newry Newtownards and Comber	Newry Castlewellan (5 companies) Morne (2 companies) Kilmore Seaforde Newtownards and Comber Lower Iveagh (3 companies) Inch Portaferry Downpatrick Islanderry Ballyculter Castleward Ardyglass Bangor Grey Abbey Rathgill Donaghadee	Saintfield Loyal Killinchy Newry Royal (2 companies) Maralin Cumber Bridge Bann Ards Hollywood Comber Tyrella Ballygowen Larchfield Egaltine Moirra Drumbo Downpatrick Portavo Rathfriland	Downpatrick Rangers	Morne Newry Merchants Downpatrick Portaferry

County	Cavalry Corps	Loyal Ballyleidy Loyal Killileagh	Killileagh Florida		
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Dublin County	Rathfarnham	Swords	Donnybrook Rangers	Ranelagh Association Killiney Rangers	Dublin Sea Fencibles Rathdown Royal Revenue
	Loyal Dublin	Loyal Dublin (4 companies)	Liffey Rangers		
	Nethercross	Kiltiernan	Lucan		
	Fingal (2 troops)	Dundrum	Glasnevin		
	Balbriggan	Palmerstown	Leixlip		
	Rathdown	Bagotrath			
	South Fingal	Finglass Bridge			
	Clonsilla	Malahide (3 companies)			
Newcastle Killiney Rangers	Sandymount Crumlin				
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Dublin City	Lawyers	Canal Harbour	Merchants (5 companies)	Bank	
	Attorneys (2 troops)	Stephens Green (10 companies)	Dublin Castle Artillery (2 companies)		
	Merchants	Rotunda (10 companies)	Loyal Marine Volunteers (4 companies)		
	Stephens Green	Uppercross Fuziliers (2 companies)	Lawyers (4 companies)		
	Rotunda	Barrack (6 companies)	Attorneys (6 companies)		
	Officers	Liberty Rangers (4 companies)	College (4 companies)		
		Linen Hall (5 companies) Revenue (3 companies)	Merion Square		
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Fermanagh		Fermanagh	Croom Castle		
		Pettigoe	Churchill True Blue		
	Fermanagh	Enniskilleners	Lisabellow (2 companies)		
	Colebrooke	Magheracross and Kilskreary	Skea Bridge		
	Lisnaskea	Lurg True Blue	Trillick		
	Lowtherstown	Magheraboy True Blue	Faugher		
		Beleek	Lurganderagh		
		Wattlebridge	Callow Hill		
	Glenawley	Loyal Ardgart			
	Belcoo	Bellisle			
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Galway	Tuam	Tuam			
	Ballinasloe and Aughrim	Loughrea Clanrichard			
	Loughrea	Leitrim Clanrichard			

	Clanrichard Longford Clanrichard Eanmenter Ballinahinch Headford Galway Volunteers Tyaquin Hampstead Kiltarton Killconnell West Dunkellin Clare Galway Aghaseragh	Galway Volunteers (4 companies) Lemonfield Loyal Clare Galway Killeen Anaghdown Portumna Clanrichard Atheary Ballinahown Bunowen		Aghaseragh	
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Kerry	Killarney Trunacmy and Clanmauric Feale Kenmare Mount Eagle Milltown Tarbert	Tarbert Clanmaurice Valentia Ballylongford Tralee			
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Kildare	Naas Forenaghts Monastereven Castledermot Millicent Legion Celbridge Kilcullen	Loyal Athy Killcullen Grangebegg Ballitoire		Monastereven	Rathangan Association Harristown
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Kilkenny	Philipstown Eglis Thomastown Knoctopher Cranna and Shillogher Gowran	City of Kilkenny Kilfane Innistogue Durrow Fessaghlineen Kells	St Canice Cranagh Gores Grove Iverk Gores Bridge	Freshford	Kilkenny Legion (2 companies) Innistogue Castle Comer
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
King's County (Offaly)	Shinrone Cooleystown and Warrenstown Clogheen and Shannon Bridge Dunkerrin Parsonstown Tullamore	Kilcoursey Parsonstown Tullamore (2 companies) Shinrone Castle Armstrong Grand Canal Guards	Clonsast Brusna Mountain Rangers Rifles Ballycane	Cooleystown	Parsonstown

	Ticknevin Geashill Garrycastle Mountain Rangers	Mountain Rangers Garryhinch Tinnehinch and Ballyboy Rangers Eglish		
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Leitrim	Ballinamore and Carrigallen Rossclogher Drumahair Mohill Manorhamilton Carrick on Shannon Barony of Carrigellan Barony of Leitrim	Lurganboy Carrick on Shannon Loughallen		Mohill
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Limerick	Costlea County Limerick Glyn West Lower Connelloe Small County Upper Connelloe Coona Newcastle Hilfinane Henry Loyal Clanwilliam Legion Limerick Kilmore Manistie Rangers Limerick City Volunteers	Palantine Limerick Merchants Limerick Garrison (3 companies) Kilfinane Adare Limerick Revenue Loyal Limerick Bruff		
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Londonderry	Londonerry Legion Louisa Cavalry of Muff Glendermot Walworth Newtown Limavady Coleraine	Coleraine Faun Glen Drapers and Desermartin Londonderry Legion (4 companies) Bellaghy Castle Dawson Agivay		City of Londonderry (2 companies) Lower Liberties Coleraine (2 companies) Macolquin Cumber Beechill Faughan

	Banagher Salters	Maghera Bovagh Ballaghy Rangers Portrush Londonderry Legion Rifles Kilrea		Limavady Myroe Balteagh Fruithill Moneymore Ballinascreen Kilcronaghan Castledawson Bellaghy Claudy Tambought Kilrea Dungiven
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Longford	Granard Ballymahon Newtownforbes Carrickfglass	Kenagh Longford (2 companies) Edgeworthstown Killashee	Ballymahon Foxhall	
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Louth	Dundalk Drogheda Ardee Collon Louth Termonfecan Barneath Ravensdale	Drogheda Dundalk Carloingford Drumear Dundalk (2 companies) Ballymascalan		Dundalk Drogheda (4 companies)
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Mayo	Royal Balina Loyal Crosmolina Kilmain Newport Pratt Gallen Castlebar	Castlebar Carra Erris Murrishj Clanmorris Turlough	Loyal Ballinglan Toomore Mayo Rangers Clare York Rangers of Mullifany (2 companies) Loyal Hollymunt Rangers	Westport Castlebar Garrison
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Meath	Lower Kells Slane Ballygarth Upper Kells Ardbraccan Rangers Navan Rathmalion Skreen Kilbrew	Demifore Upper Kells Trim Athboy Upper Slane Rathcore Rangers Dunshaughlin Loyal Slane Gormanstown	Skreen	

	Ratoath	Ballymaglasson			
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Monaghan	Clones	Ballyleck			Clones Monaghan Ballyleck Tyhallan Clontibrit
	Dartery	Clones	Franey (2 companies)		
	Monaghan	Monaghan	Tyhallan		
	Newless	Ballybay	2nd Dartrey		
	Castleblaney	Upper Trugh	Annamullen		
	Farney	Lower Trugh	Tullycorbet		
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Queen's County (Laois)	Ballyfin	Tinnehinch	Vicarstown Tinnehinch and Ballybay Legion		Portarlington Abbeyleix
	Ballynakil and Ballyroan	Portarlington			
	Mountrath	Coolraine			
	Ossory	Mount Mellick			
	Tinehinch	Stradbally			
	Maryboro	Rathdowny			
	Portnahinch	Yorke			
	Aghaboe	Abbeyleix			
	Ballylinam	Ballynakill			
	Tinnehinch and Ballybay Legion	Mount Mellick Rangers			
	Slivemargua	Maryboro			
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Roscommon	Loughlin	Boyle Corporation			
	Boyle	Castlerea			
	Barony of Athlone	Elphin			
	Roscommon	County Roscommon/Prince of Wales			
	Strokestown	Athleague			
		French Park			
	Loyal Dunamon				
	Creevemully				
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Sligo	Carberry	Tireragh	Tireragh		Sligo Volunteers (3 companies)
	Tireril	Ballymote	Drumcliff		
	Corran and Liney	Sligo Loyal	Sligo Union		
		County Sligo Light	Sligo Revnue		
		Ardnaree	Templeboy		
	Artarman				
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Tipperary	Lower Ormond	Nenagh			Roscrea Clonmell (2 companies) Thomastown Legion
	Upper Ormond	Tipperary			
	Cashel	Roscrea			
	Templemore	Carrick			

	Ouny and Arra Roscrea Western Iffa and Offa Eastern Iffa and Offa Castle Otway Farney Bridge Ballintemple Thurles Firmount Tipperary Killenaule Compsey Littleton Loyal Clanwilliam Feathard	Feathard Clonmell Borrosakane Caher Templemore Cashell Silvermines Kilcooly Lower Ormond Western Iffa and Offa Borrosakane Rangers Loyal Golden Clogheen Thurles	Thomastown Legion Kilseade Bansagh Lowe's Green	Silverforth Lisheen and Clonoulty Springhouse Rosebora and Shroull Kilmoylar Rockwell Cordangan Moores Fort Dundrum Mountbruce Clogher and Drumbane Greenfield and Donohill Mobarnan	
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Tyrone	1st Benburb Cavalry 2nd Benburb Cavalry Cookstown Fort Edward Augher and Clonoe Balnasaggart Langfield Newmills Loyal Gorten Omagh Caledon	Moy Stewartstown (2 companies) Omagh (4 companies) Aghnaghoe Strabane Castlegore Fivemiletown Pomroy Lissan Desertcrete Ballinderry Fintona Lowghry Shrule (2 companies)	Sixmilecross Lowreytown Aghnacloy Killyman (3 companies) Dungannon (2 companies) Aghalarg and Clonoe (2 companies) Clare Castelcaufield Drummond Barons Court Killylevin Loyal Saville Volunteers	Castle Caulfield Clogher Omagh Batt. of the Tyrone Legion (5 companies) Tyrone Legion Central Batt. Barons Court Drumlegass Magheryerigan Crew Derg Urney Longfield Strabane Batt. of the Tyrone Legion Strabane Upper Donaghiddy Lower Donaghiddy Leck	
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps		Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Waterford	Decies Upperthird Gaultier City of Waterford	Cappoquin Waterford Merchants (2 companies) Loyal Waterford (3 companies) City of Waterford			

	Decies without Drum Coshbride Middlethird Waterford Union Comragh Coshmore	City of Waterford Rifles Abbeyfide		Waterford
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Westmeath	Demyfore Delvin Moyashel and Magheraderan Fertullagh Moate Farbill Loyal Irish Athlone	Athlone Corkaree Kinnegad Tyrellspass Newpass Finea Waterstown		Waterstown
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Wexford	Enniscorthy Wexford Ballagheen Coolgrenny Gorey Newtownbarry New Ross Camlon Taghmon Wingfield	Wexford Enniscorthy Newtownbarry Scarawalsh (2 companies) Fethard Ogle's Loyal Blues Mountnorris Rangers Clonegal Killoughram Rangers Vinegar Hill Rangers Johnstown Rangers Shilmalier	Duncannon Castletown Broadway Ballaghkeene New Ross Ogle's Loyal Blues	Gorey Association Ballaghkeene
County	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps	Cavalry Corps	Infantry Corps
Wicklow	Wicklow Baltinglass Rathdrum Dunlavin Powerscourt Lower Talbotstown North Arklow Mount Kennedy Shelelagh Upper Talbotstown Bray	Cronebane Donard Saunders Grove Wicklow Coolattin Tinahelly Coolkenno Carnew Bray Stratford Lodge Imaal Glencree Yeomanry Pioneers	Arklow Kilcoole Anamoe Dellarossory Redcross Newrath Bridge Newcastle Buckstown Bray (2 companies) Murony Lower Talbotstown Upper Talbotstown	Loyal Wicklow Association

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