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THE DISCIPLINE AND MORALE OF THE BRITISH
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN FRANCE AND
FLANDERS 1914-18, WITH PARTICULAR
REFERENCE TO IRISH UNITS.

TIMOTHY BOWMAN

Ph.D.

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UNIVERSITY OF LUTON.

VOLUME I

THE DISCIPLINE AND MORALE OF THE BRITISH
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN FRANCE AND FLANDERS
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by

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the
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Abstract.

During the Great War many European armies (most notably the Russian) collapsed due to major disciplinary problems. However, the British Expeditionary Force avoided these problems up until the Armistice of November 1918.

This thesis examines how the discipline and morale of the B.E.F. survived the war, by using a case-study of the Irish regiments.

In 1914 with Ireland on the brink of a civil war, serious questions had been raised relating to the loyalty of the Irish regiments, particularly in the aftermath of the Curragh Incident. Indeed, intelligence reports prepared for Irish Command suggested that some reserve units would defect *en masse* to the U.V.F. if hostilities broke out in Ireland.

As the Great War progressed, the rise of Sinn Fein produced further concern about the loyalty of Irish troops, seen most vividly in the decisions not to reform the 16th. (Irish) Division following the German Spring Offensive of 1918 and to remove Irish reserve units from Ireland in 1917-18.

Nevertheless, a detailed study of courts martial (studied comprehensively in a database project) recently released by the P.R.O., demonstrates that many of the fears relating to Irish troops were groundless. Certainly Irish courts martial rates tended to be high, however, these figures were inflated by cases of drunkenness and absence, not disobedience. Likewise, while a number of mutinies did occur in Irish regiments during the war, this study has revealed that mutinies were much more common in the B.E.F. as a whole, than has been previously believed.

This study has also considered the discipline and morale problems caused by the rapid expansion of the British army in 1914 and the appointment of many officers, especially in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, on the basis of their political allegiances rather than professional knowledge.

Nevertheless, in general it appears that the discipline and morale of the Irish units in the B.E.F. was very good. Incidents of indiscipline appear to have been caused by the practical problems facing units during training and on active service rather than by the growth of the Sinn Fein movement in Ireland.

DECLARATION.

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Luton. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

T. Bowman. (Timothy Bowman).

18th day of March 1999.

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Abbreviations.

A.I.F.	Australian Imperial Force
A.N.Z.A.C.	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
A.S.C.	Army Service Corps
B.E.F.	British Expeditionary Force
C.E.F.	Canadian Expeditionary Force
C.O.	Commanding Officer
C.S.M.	Company Sergeant Major
D.M.P.	Dublin Metropolitan Police
G.H.Q.	General Headquarters
G.O.C.	General Officer Commanding
G.S.O.	General Staff Officer
I.N.V.	Irish National Volunteers
I.W.M.	Imperial War Museum
N.A.M.	National Army Museum
N.C.O.	Non-Commissioned Officer
N.I.H.	North Irish Horse
N.L.I.	National Library of Ireland
O.R.s	Other ranks
O.T.C.	Officer Training Corps
P.R.O.	Public Record Office, Kew
P.R.O.N.I.	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
R.A.F.	Royal Air Force
R.F.A.	Royal Field Artillery
R.F.C.	Royal Flying Corps
R.G.A.	Royal Garrison Artillery
R.I.C.	Royal Irish Constabulary
R.N.R.	Royal Naval Reserve
R.N.V.R.	Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve
R.S.M.	Regimental Sergeant Major
S.R.	Special Reserve
T.F.	Territorial Force
U.V.F.	Ulster Volunteer Force

Volume 1

INTRODUCTION.

This study will focus on two key areas of Great War historiography, both of which have received very little attention from historians, albeit for very different reasons. A comprehensive account of discipline and morale in the British Expeditionary Force between 1914 and 1918 has only been made possible in the last five years due to the release of courts martial papers by the Ministry of Defence. That is not to say that this topic has been completely ignored by historians.¹ Indeed, David Englander, J. Fuller, G. D. Sheffield and J. Brent-Wilson have all produced interesting work relating to morale and discipline in the British army during the Great War.² However, the opening of previously restricted files now means that most of this previous work needs to be drastically reassessed.

The second issue which this thesis will consider is the role of Irish troops in the First World War. This may seem rather strange given that a number of works have recently been published on Ireland's role in the Great War.³ Equally, compared to, for

¹Or, indeed, the general public. The leading Labour backbench M.P., Mr. Andrew McKinlay, has been carrying out a relatively high profile campaign to have all 306 soldiers in the British army, who were executed during the 1914-18 period, posthumously pardoned. On the 24th. July 1998 the government refused to grant posthumous pardons, on the basis that insufficient evidence was available to reassess these cases. See, *The Guardian*, 25/7/98, p.5 and *The Daily Telegraph*, 25/7/98, pp. 1, 4 and 19.

²D. Englander, "Discipline and morale in the British army, 1917-1918", in J. Horne (ed.), State, society and mobilisation in Europe during the First World War, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, J. Fuller, Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, G. D. Sheffield, "Officer-man relations: Morale and Discipline in the British Army, 1902-22", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1994 and J. Brent-Wilson, "The Morale and Discipline of the British Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918", unpublished M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, Canada, 1978.

³Most notably, T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers: The 16th. (Irish) Division in the Great War 1914-18, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 1992, T. P. Dooley, Irishmen or English Soldiers? The Times and World of a Southern Catholic Irish Man (1876-1916) Enlisting in the British Army during the First World War, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 1995, M. Dungan, Irish Voices from the Great War, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 1995, M. Dungan, They Shall Grow Not Old, Irish Soldiers and the Great War, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 1997, D. Fitzpatrick (ed.), Ireland and

example, Scotland or Northern England, our knowledge of Ireland, in a military sense, between 1914 and 1918 is well developed.

However, as recently as 1992, Keith Jeffery felt moved to describe Ireland and the First World War as an historical no-mans land, noting;

This dangerous zone sits between two opposing perceptions of Ireland's role in the war; on the one side is a Unionist image of Irish Protestants loyally, and exclusively, rallying to the flag in 1914, along with Ulster's own losses at the front, sealing the Union with blood in an equivalent national sacrifice to that of the men of Easter 1916 in Ireland. On the other, Catholic and Nationalist, side, the men of the rising represent the 'real' and true Ireland, in sharp contrast to the misguided youths, duped into taking the 'King's Shilling' by worn out politicians, who are slaughtered in France at the altar of British imperialism. Between these crude extremes lies a more complex and human reality.⁴

This has meant that, while much has been written on the 1916 Easter Rising and the growth of Sinn Fein, the service of Irish troops in the war has been pushed to the fringes of Irish historiography in this period.

This, in turn, has meant that, until very recently and still not decisively, the issues surrounding Irish involvement in the Great War have been left to retired army officers⁵ and enthusiastic amateurs⁶ to research. As a result, Irish troops' service during the First World War has been seen almost purely in terms of their actions in battle. Indeed, the recent republication of C. Falls and B. Cooper's divisional

the First World War, Lilliput Press and Trinity History Workshop, Dublin, 1988, T. Johnstone, Orange, Green and Khaki: The Story of the Irish Regiments in the Great War, 1914-18, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1992; and P. Orr, The Road to the Somme: Men of the Ulster Division Tell Their Story, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1987.

⁴K. Jeffery, foreword in T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers.

⁵For example, T. Johnstone, Orange, Green and Khaki.

⁶For example, P. Orr, The Road to the Somme.

histories,⁷ which remain the definitive works on the units concerned, demonstrates that, in many ways, the debate on Ireland's role in the war has developed little since the 1920s.

Given the lack of attention that has been paid to Irish units serving in the British army in the Great War, it has been decided to use them, as a sample, to consider discipline and morale in the British Expeditionary Force. A particularly important area to consider is the link between the home front and Irish troops on the Western Front, and especially how Irish men serving in the British army reacted to the Easter Rising of 1916 and the subsequent growth of Sinn Fein in the 1916-18 period.

Of course, there are problems in using Irish units as a sample, in that the "Irish experience" of the First World War was very untypical of the "British Experience". Ireland was the only part of the United Kingdom to experience a domestic rebellion during the war, namely the 1916 Easter Rising. The war was not as "total" for Ireland as for other parts of the British Isles, largely as conscription was not introduced into Ireland and, also, as Irish civilians did not suffer the same dangers from Zeppelin and later Gotha bombers or coastal bombardments as did their counterparts in England. Equally, while the political situation in the rest of Britain could hardly be described as stable during the war, the Irish political situation was extremely fluid. In terms of Irish troop morale, this political setting was very important as the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions both assumed political overtones that were almost unique in the British army during the Great War. Lastly, the economic situation in Ireland was very different to that in the rest of the United Kingdom; many sectors of the economy failed to achieve a full war footing (most notably agriculture), while the absence of dilution, which was brought about in the rest of Britain by conscription, meant that labour

⁷C. Falls, The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, Mc Caw, Stevenson and Orr, Belfast, 1922, republished by Constable, London, 1996 and B. Cooper, The Tenth (Irish) Division at Gallipoli, Jenkins, London, 1918, republished by Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 1992.

unrest was not a serious problem in Irish industry. This situation means that both civilian morale and the pressures on Irish soldiers serving in France and Flanders were rather different from that of their counterparts from Great Britain.

Purely from a military point of view, Ireland's experience of the First World War was unique. Firstly, in terms of military organisation, the 1908 army reforms had little impact on Ireland; no Territorial Force units existed in the country at all.⁸ Secondly, and somewhat paradoxically, Ireland was a "militarised society" in 1914, to an extent that the rest of Britain was not, as between 200,000 and 250,000 Irishmen were members of either the Irish Volunteers, Ulster Volunteer Force or Irish Citizens' Army.⁹ Thirdly, Irish recruits were rarely specialists, most joining their local infantry unit; notably, even the artillery units of the 10th. (Irish), 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions were raised in England.¹⁰ Fourthly, declining recruiting rates and the non-introduction of conscription in Ireland meant that Irish units serving overseas suffered from severe manning problems from a very early stage in the war and a very large number of Irish service and, in the case of the Connaught Rangers, even regular, battalions were forced to amalgamate. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, there was always some political concern about the Irish units. The assimilation of para-military, heavily politicised recruits into the British Army was far from easy, while the Easter Rising and growth of the Sinn Fein movement in 1916-18 did little to reassure British military and political leaders about the loyalty of Irishmen serving in the British

⁸On this issue see, I. B. Gailey, W. F. Gillespie and J. Hasselt, An Account of the Territorials in Northern Ireland 1947-1978, T.A.V.R., Belfast, 1979, p. 13 and I. F. W. Beckett, The Amateur Military Tradition 1558-1945, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991, pp. 294-5.

⁹Figures taken from, D. Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922", in T. Bartlett and K. Jeffery (eds.), A Military History of Ireland, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, pp.383 and 386.

¹⁰T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers. The 16th. (Irish) Division during the Great War, 1914-18, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 1992, p.62, C. Falls, The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, p.8 and J. Lynch, "The Comparative Aspect in Local Studies", in R. Gillespie and M. Hill (eds.), Doing Irish Local History, Pursuit and Practice, The Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast, 1998, pp. 135-8.

army. Nevertheless, it has been decided to concentrate on Irish units for the reasons outlined above and also because the nine Irish infantry and six Irish cavalry regiments provide a manageable and clearly definable sample. Equally, as Ireland in 1914-18 had a diverse economy with both industrial and agrarian components, the reaction of different economic groups to service in the British army can be examined. Lastly, the volatile Irish political situation during the Great War put particular strains on Irish troops serving on the Western Front. However, the disparities between Irish and British troops will be fully addressed in this thesis, by using sample non-Irish units for comparative purposes. This issue will be dealt with later in the introduction, but first a definition must be made of the terms “discipline” and “morale”.

Morale and discipline are, in a military sense, two complimentary, but rather separate concepts. The dictionary definition of discipline is; “training or a way of life aimed at self control and obedience; order maintained or observed among pupils, soldiers and others under control.”¹¹ While morale is defined as; “the mental attitude or bearing of a person or group, especially as regards confidence, discipline, etc.”¹²

Lord Moran, following his own experiences as a medical officer to the 1st. Battalion, Royal Fusiliers during the Great War, clarifies these definitions;

A man under discipline does things at the instigation of someone in authority, and if he doesn't he is punished. A man with high morale does things because in his own mind he has decided to do them without any suggestion from outside sources. Discipline, control from without, can only be relaxed safely when it is replaced by something higher and better, control from within. To put it differently, discipline loses much of its vital importance when the human material - officers and men - is exceptional. Men rebel against discipline when they know in their hearts that it is not necessary.

¹¹Oxford Reference Dictionary, p.233.

¹²ibid, p.534.

This they can only know with any assurance in the presence of danger, which is the acid test of their morale.¹³

R. Holmes has developed this theme and stressed the thin line between morale and discipline stating; “the most effective discipline is self-imposed, which springs from the tribal structure of small groups and from mutual confidence between leaders and led.”¹⁴ Other historians writing about morale and discipline have formulated their own definitions. Brent Wilson has stated of morale; “Like any product of the mind, it is difficult to explain in words and is usually spoken of in terms of being high or low. Field Marshal Montgomery defined morale as that which develops a man’s latent heroism so that the soldier is able to overcome his desire to take the easy way out or surrender to his fears. Or, more simply, high morale is the ability to triumph over discomfort and dangers and carry on with the job.”¹⁵ Brent Wilson further notes; “Discipline can be defined as intelligent and cheerful obedience to the letter and spirit of orders at all times. It has a dual purpose on the battlefield. Discipline’s object is to conquer fear and create staunchness in action.”¹⁶

There are two generally recognised categories of morale; individual and collective. Collective morale can often be seen as *esprit d’corps* in a very literal sense, namely pride in one’s regiment. However, Brent Wilson stresses that; “in the crisis of battle the majority of men do not seek encouragement from the glories of the past, but from their leaders and comrades of the present.”¹⁷ However, G. D. Sheffield, in his study,¹⁸ suggests that *esprit d’corps*, in the sense of regimental pride, can be an important component of morale.

¹³Lord Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage*, Constable, London, 1945, p.177.

¹⁴R. Holmes, *Firing Line*, Pimlico, London, 1994, p.332.

¹⁵J. Brent Wilson, “The Morale and Discipline of the British Expeditionary Force”, p.1.

¹⁶*ibid*, p.2.

¹⁷*ibid*, p.17.

¹⁸G. D. Sheffield, “Officer-man relations”, 1994, pp.72 and 85.

However, for the purposes of this study, I have decided to stay with basic definitions, concluding generally that morale is the force which comes from within which makes a soldier carry out his duty, while discipline is an external force which carries out the same function. Having defined what is meant by discipline and morale, it is necessary to outline previously published work on these topics and the Irish units in the Great War, before considering at greater length, how discipline and morale in the British Expeditionary Force between 1914 and 1918 can be evaluated and the problems that this poses.

Before 1993 all studies, with the exception of A. Babington's,¹⁹ suffered from the basic problem that authors were unable to consult the Courts Martial records held at the Public Record Office, Kew. These were finally released in 1993 as the seventy-five year restriction rule was substituted for the one hundred year closure which had been originally envisaged.

Nevertheless, as early as 1919 the Court Martial system, the main disciplinary system in the British Army between 1914 and 1918, came under the spotlight with the publication of the Darling Report.²⁰ During the war itself, the government was very reluctant to release information on the courts martial system and especially the number of men sentenced to death by it. For example, on the 21st. March 1916 when the Under Secretary of State for War, H. J. Tennant, was asked directly how many soldiers under the age of twenty had been executed following courts martial he replied; "Just as it is not in the public interest that a question like this should be asked, so it is not in the public interest that it should be answered."²¹ Nevertheless, a small number of M.P.s, never more than twenty in number, continued to raise the courts martial issue throughout the war and received some support in the popular press, notably in

¹⁹A. Babington, For the Sake of Example; Capital Courts Martial 1914-18 The Truth, Leo Cooper, London, 1983.

²⁰Report of the Committee constituted by the Army Council to enquire into the Laws and Rules of Procedure Regulating Military Courts Martial, Parliamentary Papers, Reports from Commissioners and others, H.M.S.O., London, 1919, command 428. (Henceforth cited as the Darling Report).

²¹House of Commons Debates, LXXI, 1916, column 30.

Horatio Bottomley's *John Bull*. Thus with the end of hostilities, the government decided to concede to parliamentary opinion and appointed a commission under Lord Justice Darling to investigate the operation of the courts martial system during the war. The commission was prohibited by the Army Council from publishing all the evidence which came before it, but, nevertheless considered that; "The results of our investigations into a limited number of cases put before us as typical lead us to the conclusion that, having regard to all the circumstances, the work of Courts-Martial during the war has been well done. We are satisfied that members of Courts-Martial intended to be absolutely fair to those who came before them, but also that the rank and file have confidence in their fairness."²²

However, this report was certainly not a whitewash; the committee split and even the more conservative majority report was critical of the courts martial system operating during the First World War. A wide variety of problems were identified; the existing disciplinary code of the army was difficult for even trained lawyers to understand and officers' legal knowledge was generally poor. Delays between arrest and trial were too long, a counsel should always be available for the defence and the prosecution was often poorly prepared or incompetent. Sentence should be announced in open court before confirmation, a wider variety of punishments was required for officers, court proceedings on the court martial of an executed soldier should be available to his next of kin, or legal representative and the soldiers right to appeal a Court Martial decision should always be made clear to him.²³

Following the publication of the Darling Report debate largely ceased on the courts martial issue. The introduction of the Army and Air Force Act in 1928, which reduced the number of offences for which servicemen could be executed, further removed the issue from the political arena. Apart from Brigadier General F. P. Crozier's tastelessly entitled work²⁴ which made it clear, both that men had been

²²Darling Report, p.3.

²³ibid, pp.6-11.

²⁴F. P. Crozier, *The Men I Killed*, Michael Joseph, London, 1937.

executed without the benefit of courts martial and that political influence had been brought to bear to prevent at least one officer from being court martialled, the debate in historical and political, although not in literary circles, went silent until 1974.²⁵

In that year, a journalist, William Moore published The Thin Yellow Line.²⁶ This is, in many ways a rather confused book as it begins the study of military law in the English Civil War and then proceeds, in a very haphazard and unsystematic fashion, until 1945. The main section of the book deals with British army executions during the First World War, but the author's attempt to draw parallels with the military justice system in operation during the Peninsular War or while the Duke of Cumberland was Commander in Chief of the British army, fail to convince. Crucially he gives almost no information on the army in peacetime or the introduction of the Army Discipline Regulation Act, in 1879, which governed how courts martial were held during the Great War.

Moore's work on the 1914-18 war is also far from flawless. While it does raise some interesting points about the separate treatment of officers and men by the military authorities, the shell-shock issue and parliamentary and public concern over military executions, it does include a certain amount of journalistic licence. For example, Moore alleges that Sir Robert McCalmont, Unionist Member of Parliament for Antrim East, was involved in an attempt to vindicate the government's policy over courts martial.²⁷ However, an examination of the questions asked by him in the House of Commons²⁸ fails to bear out this conspiracy theory and Moore fails to cite

²⁵Novels, such as A. P. Herbert, The Secret Battle, Methuen, London, 1919 and J. Johnston, How Many Miles to Babylon?, Hamilton, London, 1974 and films, such as David Lean's, King and Country, released in 1964, have dealt with the issue of executions in the Great War. However, they made little long term impact on public opinion, and certainly did not intrude into the political arena. This was in sharp contrast to the situation in France, where the government prevented the showing of Stanley Kubrick's damning indictment of French courts martial policy, Paths of Glory (made in 1957), until 1975. See, A. Kelly, Cinema and the Great War, Routledge, London, 1997, pp. 162-9 and 176-80.

²⁶W. Moore, The Thin Yellow Line, Leo Cooper, London, 1974.

²⁷ibid, p.123.

²⁸House of Commons Debates, vol. LXXVIII, 1916, column 630. I am grateful to

any source for this serious allegation that M.P.s with an army background were being asked by the War Office to ask misleading questions in the House of Commons.

The next significant piece of work to appear on discipline on the Western Front between 1914-1918 was D. Gill and G. Dallas' article.²⁹ This work demonstrated that, in many ways, the "mutiny" at Etaples in 1917, was reminiscent of a pre-war industrial strike, rather than the blood thirsty mutinies of popular imagination. It also demonstrated that the mutineers singled out military policemen rather than officers for violence and that the High Command behaved with tact and restraint in dealing with the mutiny. With particular reference to this present study, Gill and Dallas noted that, while Scottish and A.N.Z.A.C. troops were most active in the disturbances, men of the 16th. (Irish) Division played a very minor role; "all they did was to raid the canteen and sit outside and get drunk and encourage the others."³⁰

Gill and Dallas went on to give brief accounts of mutinies in Labour Corps units, which they believed were bloodily repressed, in contrast to the Etaples disturbances, as these mutineers were Chinese and Egyptians whom the army viewed as "natives".³¹ These authors concluded their article by pointing out that the largest mutiny in the British Expeditionary Force in France and Flanders, significantly, took place at Calais in January 1919, two months after hostilities had ceased.

D. Englander and J. Osborne's article,³² made a number of important points relating to discipline. They introduced an international perspective by noting; "The Russian armies collapsed, the Italians deserted, the French mutinied: the British soldier, however, apparently did little more than curse his fate."³³ They went on to state that a number of arbitrary punishments without official sanction took place

Dr. Alvin Jackson of the Queen's University of Belfast for further information on Mc Calmont's career.

²⁹G. Dallas and D. Gill, "Mutiny at Etaples Base in 1917", *Past and Present*, 69, 1975.

³⁰Letter from Major O. C. Guinness to the authors, cited in, *ibid*, p.101.

³¹*ibid*, p.102.

³²D. Englander and J. Osborne, "Jack, Tommy and Henry Dubb: the armed forces and the working class", *Historical Journal*, 21, 3, 1978.

³³*ibid*, p.594.

during the war and also pointed out that desertion to the enemy and malingering were relatively common occurrences; however, they did stress that self-mutilation was very rare in the British Army. The authors also made an interesting point about regular, territorial, volunteer and conscript discipline, noting that by 1917/18; “if naval unrest is any guide, it was from the professional soldier rather than the conscript that organised trouble was to be expected- or might have been, but for the regular army having been annihilated by the end of 1914.”³⁴ Finally, Englander and Osborne stressed that attempts to politicise the forces or to form soldiers’ trades union were generally unsuccessful and most soldiers complaints rested, almost literally, on bread and butter issues, namely the poor quality and lack of variety of their rations and their poor pay, compared to the Dominion Forces.

A. Babington’s work³⁵ was groundbreaking for the simple reason that the author was able to gain access to the full courts martial records. Babington’s book was useful in outlining the background of men executed and in showing that some contemporary accounts of courts martial were inaccurate and misleading. Crucially, he illustrated that men had been executed following mutinies at Etaples in 1917, Blargies in Autumn 1916 and in the Egyptian Labour Corps at Marseilles in September 1917. However, this book was strongly criticised by reviewers at the time of publication as no primary material, apart from the courts martial records themselves, had been examined and the secondary material used was woefully incomplete.³⁶ Also Babington had refused to name the men executed, referring instead to Privates A, B, C, etc. or the units with which they were serving. While this restriction was probably imposed by the Ministry of Defence, it does seem bizarre given that the cases of Sub-Lieutenant Dyett and Private Thomas Hope had been discussed in the House of Commons as early as 1917.³⁷

³⁴ibid, p.602.

³⁵A. Babington, *For the Sake of Example*.

³⁶See, for example, I. F. W. Beckett’s review in *The Journal of the Society of Army Historical Research*, 1985, pp.105-7.

³⁷*House of Commons Debates*, vol.XCVIII, 31/10/17.

Another flaw in Babington's work, not highlighted by reviewers, was its uncritical attitude to the legal system. This became even clearer in the preface he wrote to another book in which he stated; "I feel certain that Captain Griffith-Jones, the Judge Advocate at Dyett's court-martial, who was an experienced barrister, would not have allowed the trial to proceed if there had been anything amiss with the legal procedure."³⁸ Babington thus exonerates legally qualified officers from any blame that could attach to them over their role in courts martial. Even more irritatingly, Babington treats his readership as if they have no legal knowledge, and, as a result the summaries of many cases are insufficient and serious legal flaws, for example in the case of Private Hope,³⁹ which will be examined in chapter two, are not pointed out as they are seen as too complicated for a general readership to understand. Lastly, and most importantly, despite being a retired High Court Judge and a legal historian, Babington made no comparison between the operation of military and civil law in this period. Few legal historians share his rosy view of the Edwardian civil justice system⁴⁰ pointing out, for example, that in magistrates' courts the Justice of the Peace rarely had any legal qualifications and that few working class or lower middle class people could expect legal representation in court.

G. Dallas and D. Gill re-entered the debate in 1985 with the publication of *The Unknown Army*.⁴¹ This book did make some useful points relating to trade union and Sinn Fein influence in the Army, but its strongest section remained that on the Etaples Mutiny. There is also a certain air of desperation in this work as the authors

³⁸L. Sellers, *For God's Sake Shoot Straight! The Story of the Court Martial of Sub Lieutenant Edwin Dyett*, Leo Cooper, London, 1996, p.XI.

³⁹See the transcript of the court martial of Private Thomas Hope, P.R.O., WO71/432.

⁴⁰See A. Babington, *The Rule of Law in Britain from the Roman Occupation to the Present Day: The Only Liberty*, Barry Rose Publishers, London, 1978, pp.260-2. This should be compared with, A. H. Manchester, *A Modern Legal History of England and Wales, 1750-1950*, Butterworths, London, 1980, p.100, T. Skyrme, *History of the Justices of the Peace*, Barry Rose Publishers, Chichester, 1994, p.686 and W. R. Cornish, *Law and Society in England, 1750-1950*, Sweet and Maxwell, London, 1989, p.620.

⁴¹G. Dallas and D. Gill, *The Unknown Army: Mutinies in the British Army in World War One*, Verso, London, 1985.

seemed intent on proving that indiscipline was widespread in the B.E.F.. The chapter entitled "Not Irishmen but English Soldiers", which is of most relevance to the current study, makes some farcical comparisons, for example; "All the great powers had their Ireland's, their irredentia, or recruited soldiers from their subject lands. Germany had her Polish, Danish, Alsatian and Lorraine soldiers, Russia her Muslims and her Poles; Austria the Czechs and Slavs."⁴² This ignores the point that, not only was indiscipline in Irish units inconsequential compared to that of say, the Czechs in the Austro-Hungarian service,⁴³ but that, unlike in most other parts of Europe, conscription did not apply in Ireland during the Great War and, as a result, all Irish troops were, by definition, volunteers. Despite these flaws and the fact that Dallas and Gill ignore much important primary and secondary material, they do give some useful examples of Irish troops' reactions to the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin and Sinn Fein infiltration into the Irish Regiments in 1917 and 1918. Much of this book, as in the case of other work on discipline and morale, continues the study until 1920 and thus will be discussed later.

L. James,⁴⁴ like W. Moore before him, looked at a collection of historical incidents, ranging from the Naval Mutinies of 1797 to the Army Mutinies in 1917-1919. James' work relied heavily on secondary material and offered no new conclusions on disciplinary problems in the British army between 1914 and 1918. However, he did make some mention of Boer War and Sudanese courts-martial cases

⁴²ibid, p.47.

⁴³On disciplinary problems in Czech units during the Great War see, M. Cornwall, "Morale and patriotism in the Austro-Hungarian army, 1914-1918", in J. Horne (ed.), State, society and mobilisation in Europe, R. Jerábek, "The Eastern Front 1914-18", in M. Cornwall (ed.), The Last Years of Austria-Hungary: Essays in Political and Military History 1908-1918, University of Exeter Press, Exeter, 1990, pp. 105-7, and R. G. Plasihka, "Contradicting Ideologies: The Pressure of ideological Conflicts in the Austro-Hungarian Army of World War I", in R. A. Kann, B. K. Király and P. S. Fichtner (eds.), The Hapsburg Empire in World War I: Essays on the Intellectual, Military, Political and Economic Aspects of the Hapsburg War Effort, East European Quarterly and Boulder and Columbia University Press, New York, 1977.

⁴⁴L. James, Mutiny in the British and Commonwealth Forces, 1791-1956, Buchan and Enright Publishers, London, 1987.

which offer a useful comparison to those of the Great War.⁴⁵ In his chapter “Red Coat and Green Flag: Irish Mutinies, 1798-1920” James notes that, while the 1916 Rising caused no problems regarding the loyalty of Irish troops serving on the Western Front; “a handful of men serving with the Royal Navy’s armoured-car squadron in Russia had to be sent home after they had become restless on hearing reports from Dublin.”⁴⁶

J. Putkowski and J. Sykes book, Shot at Dawn⁴⁷ appeared in 1989. Like Babington, they felt that it was useful in considering courts-martial cases, to understand the background of the executed soldier, and gave a brief biographical account of each man executed including his full name and unit details. Understandably there are some mistakes; the current author’s work on the courts martial of Irish soldiers (see chapter two) has shown that sometimes Putkowski and Sykes simply used the wrong name.⁴⁸ Nevertheless the work does suffer from serious problems. Firstly, one could question the concentration solely on those shot at dawn: most soldiers who appeared before a court martial were charged with nothing more serious than drunkenness and received, predominantly, three months field punishment number one. Secondly, the authors follow a clear, political agenda in this work, namely to obtain a pardon for all men executed under the Army Act between 1914 and 1920. This, it can most charitably be said, clouds their judgement, for example they state that; “commanders reviewing capital cases frequently seemed reluctant to commute death sentences,”⁴⁹ when it is quite clear that only eleven per cent of men sentenced to death by a court martial were actually executed.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ibid, p.85.

⁴⁶ibid, p.201.

⁴⁷J. Putkowski and J. Sykes, Shot at Dawn, Executions in World War One by Authority of the British Army Act, Leo Cooper, London, 1989.

⁴⁸For example, they consistently refer to Private M. Monaghan of the 1st. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, executed on the 28/10/17, as Private S. Byrne. See J. Putkowski and J. Sykes, Shot at Dawn, p. 212. However, there is nothing in Monaghan’s court martial transcript to suggest that he used an alias, see P. R. O., WO71/613.

⁴⁹ibid, p.17.

⁵⁰W. Childs, Episodes and Reflections: Being Some Records from the Life of Major General Sir Wyndham Childs, Cassell and Co. Ltd., London, 1930, p.136.

G. D. Sheffield in his article on the military police in the First World War⁵¹ said disappointingly little about their role in the courts martial process and what influenced their decision on whether or not to charge a man found separated from his unit, behind the lines, with desertion. Sheffield instead concentrates on the Corps of Military Police and its battlefield role, namely how they helped to reorganise stragglers and stem panic in the reserve trenches. In considering this issue he makes the point that, even during the German Spring Offensive of 1918, straggling was not common amongst British infantry units, most of the stragglers actually being members of the Labour Corps.

In his unpublished thesis,⁵² Dr. Sheffield does make some important points on discipline. For example, highlighting how differently it was applied in pre-war regular and territorial force units, and that this practice continued during the war. He also makes the point that, at least pre-war, regular soldiers preferred to be led by gentlemen and that, as a result, between 1914 and 1918, officers of humbler origins were moulded into replicas of the pre-war ideal.⁵³ Equally, he notes that a paternalistic attitude persisted in the British army between 1914 and 1918 and often officers would not report serious crimes, or even, personal insults from their men, as they did not want to risk their mens' lives at a Field General Court Martial trial. Dr. Sheffield, notes, sensibly, that; "Men who were punished by death, penal servitude or field punishment number one constituted only a small minority of British other ranks. Yet these punishments had an impact on British soldiers out of all proportion to the number of men directly affected. Severe punishments acted as a salutary reminder of

⁵¹G. D. Sheffield, "British Military Police and their Battlefield Role, 1914-18", *Sandhurst Journal of Military Studies*, 1, 1990.

⁵²G. D. Sheffield, "Officer-man relations: Morale and Discipline in the British Army, 1902-22". For a condensed version of Dr. Sheffield's views, see, G. Sheffield, "Officer-Man Relations, Discipline and Morale in the British Army of the Great War", in H. Cecil and P. H. Liddle (eds.), *Facing Armageddon, The First World War Experienced*, Leo Cooper, London, 1996.

⁵³G. D. Sheffield, "Officer-man relations: Morale and Discipline in the British Army 1902-22", p.96.

the power that the army had over their lives, and that the military authorities on occasions regarded the enforcement and maintenance of military discipline as more important than justice.”⁵⁴

1994 saw the publication of A. Peacock’s article,⁵⁵ on courts-martial, following the opening of these records at the Public Record Office. Peacock’s method of sampling cases was unsystematic and he ended his study in 1916. He did, however, make the valid point that while courts martial records are the most reliable indicator of disciplinary problems in a unit they are not entirely accurate as a unit commander may either have as many men as possible court martialled to tighten up discipline or may charge very few men, as he would see a high number of courts martial cases as an indication that he was not an effective disciplinarian.

David Englander’s work on discipline and morale in the B.E.F., during 1917-18,⁵⁶ made effective use of the Fifth Army war diaries and court martial records in assessing disciplinary problems. However, Englander’s remarks on discipline in the B.E.F. appear rather confused. Initially concluding that discipline in the Fifth Army was very good,⁵⁷ he then suggests that a major mutiny could have occurred in 1918, had the German Spring Offensive not taken place!⁵⁸

P. Scott’s article on discipline and morale in the B.E.F. in 1917,⁵⁹ contains some interesting views on officers’ legal training. However, this article is disappointing in two ways. Firstly, the author reveals his prejudices at the outset of his article, stating of the Army Act; “it was no finely honed legal instrument, but rather a broad-headed sledgehammer to be brought down smartly and with great force on any

⁵⁴ibid, p.96.

⁵⁵A. Peacock, “Sentenced by Court Martial, Some Notes”, *Gunfire*, 29, 1994.

⁵⁶D. Englander, “Discipline and morale in the British army, 1917-18”.

⁵⁷ibid, p.136.

⁵⁸ibid, p.141.

⁵⁹P. Scott, “Law and Orders: Discipline and Morale in the British Armies in France, 1917”, in P. H. Liddle (ed.), *Passchendaele in Perspective, The Third Battle of Ypres*, Leo Cooper, London, 1997.

military delinquent.”⁶⁰ Secondly, while Scott did make use of courts martial records, he did not assess these in any systematic fashion, instead dwelling on the most serious crimes, viz, desertion, mutiny and cowardice.

The last two works to be considered, are what the opening of the archives to the general public may lead to, namely a series of ill informed works calling for the pardon of individual soldiers who were executed during the First World War. R. Ferguson⁶¹ does little to convince with his comment that; “many trials were a sham. In today’s terminology, some were little better than a paramilitary kangaroo court.”⁶² One may not agree with the decisions of courts-martial, but to compare a properly constituted General Court Martial or Field General Court Martial of the Great War with the type of Irish Republican Army or Ulster Defence Association meeting which hands out a punishment beating as a sentence in present day Belfast is clearly ludicrous.

Equally Ferguson makes the point that; “During some of the trials, which were called Field General Courts Martial, men who were accused of, say, Cowardice or Desertion were very rarely afforded the luxury of a defence representative. It may be hard to picture today, but many ordinary soldiers in the army at that time, whether enlisted or a volunteer, could not read or write.”⁶³ Not only were literacy rates considerably higher than Ferguson allows, but he should have made the point that working or lower middle class people tried by civilian courts in this period rarely had legal representation. Ferguson proceeds to outline the case of Rifleman James Crozier, of the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, a notoriously unfair case, as a supposedly representative example of First World War courts martial.

Leonard Sellers’ work⁶⁴ is, if possible, even worse, largely as he expands what might have made a reasonable article into a full book. A brief history of the Royal

⁶⁰ibid, p.349.

⁶¹R. Ferguson, “They Died at Dawn”, Causeway, Summer, 1995.

⁶²ibid, p.29.

⁶³ibid, p.29.

⁶⁴L. Sellers, For God’s Sake Shoot Straight! The Story of the Court Martial of Sub

Naval Division is of little value, while the exchange of letters between Mr. Sellers and the Prime Minister, reproduced in full at the end of the book, hardly enhances one's knowledge of the case. Nevertheless the section on Dyett's case is well written and this is a case worth considering, if only because it is one of the few occasions during World War One when a British officer was executed.

Morale is a much more elusive and complicated concept than discipline. As a result it has never been a politically charged term and has, therefore, produced much less work than discipline in the First World War. Lord Moran first tackled some of the issues behind morale in his The Anatomy of Courage. Moran outlined his view, formed as a medical officer during the Great War, that each man held a "bank account" of courage that would eventually run out, depending on the experiences he went through. Moran felt that volunteers from country areas, "Yokels" as he unflatteringly termed them, were better adapted to war than men from the towns and cities. (This idea may find little acceptance amongst modern psychiatrists, but it may be worth bearing in mind when examining the differences in morale between the Royal Irish Rifles, largely raised from industrial Belfast and the Connaught Rangers, recruited from an overwhelmingly rural area). His views on conscripts were frank; "Conscription when it came hustled to arms a lot of quivering creatures who would never have gone to war of their own free will."⁶⁵ Moran also noted that; "The English are not good haters,"⁶⁶ and apart from when the Germans first used poison gas in April 1915, German prisoners of war were well treated. This suggests that, by nature, the English spirit was not as aggressive as some senior commanders hoped.

J. Baynes provides an invaluable study, by a regular army officer, of morale in one battalion during the early part of the war.⁶⁷ While the book does suffer from

Lieutenant Edwin Dyett, Leo Cooper, London, 1996.

⁶⁵Lord Moran, The Anatomy of Courage, p. 13.

⁶⁶ibid, p.56. Moran here was specifically referring to English, rather than British troops.

⁶⁷J. Baynes, Morale, A Study of Men and Courage: The Second Scottish Rifles at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, 1915, Leo Cooper, London, 1967.

some flaws, namely that the sample taken is too small, the time period too short and that the author is perhaps too closely connected to the regiment to be completely impartial, it is particularly useful in showing how morale in a unit can be assessed. In Baynes' view; cheerfulness amongst all ranks, proper saluting, a good turn out, few disciplinary cases, good treatment of visitors, cleanliness, a small number of men reporting sick, constant patrolling of "No-Mans Land", preparedness to assume responsibility and ultimately the ability of men to sacrifice themselves, are all indicators of high morale.

Baynes also makes the point that high losses helped to maintain high morale in the British army during the Great War; "To give loss of life as a cause of high morale may seem odd, and perhaps a little callous. However, a soldier gets less and less eager to fight the longer he stays in the battle area. A few men thrive on war, but most get progressively more unwilling to face danger as time goes on. A certain doggedness will keep them at their place of duty, but they become increasingly unwilling to face danger."⁶⁸

J. Brent Wilson in his unpublished M.A. thesis of 1978⁶⁹ promised a radical reappraisal of the B.E.F.'s disciplinary problems stating; "this survey shows that discipline in the front-line infantry frequently lapsed and officers were sometimes forced to use extreme measures to stem temporary panics."⁷⁰ This early promise was not fulfilled, but Brent Wilson did demonstrate how the High Command measured morale; namely by considering records on courts martial, trench foot cases, shell shock cases and general illness in units and observing other tell tale signs; for example, if soldiers did not salute as frequently as they were meant to, this was seen as a sign of poor morale and discipline in a unit. Unfortunately, Brent Wilson's study ultimately gave little information on morale and discipline in the British Army as, not only were many primary sources crucially important for testing the validity of the thesis, not open

⁶⁸ibid, pp.100-101.

⁶⁹J. Brent Wilson, "Morale and Discipline of the British Expeditionary Force".

⁷⁰ibid, p.VIII.

to the public, but the author chose too large a sample and relied too heavily on secondary works.

Brent Wilson did make some comments on Irish units, but these were at best unenlightening and at worst misleading. For example, he states; "Several units received a bad class of man because of their recruiting district. For instance, the Royal Irish Rifles, who recruited in Belfast, could not compete with the Ulster Division and received only the rejects from other units."⁷¹ This comment completely ignores the fact that nine of the original battalions in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, were actually service battalions of the Royal Irish Rifles! To conclude then on Brent Wilson's work, it was useful in highlighting periods when morale was in a crisis and provides some interesting material on both the High Commands concern and the "bureaucratisation" of the offensive spirit. However, the availability of courts-martial records, released in 1993, now means that much of this study needs to be drastically revised.

S. P. Mackenzie in his book published in 1992⁷² made some important points on the changing composition and ideals of the British Expeditionary Force;

The long-service soldier of the Victorian and Edwardian eras would, generally speaking, accept the hardships and privations of active service as part of his professional existence. For most of the volunteers and conscripts who made up the bulk of the Army after 1914-15, however, the situation was different. Regarding themselves first and foremost as citizens and only secondarily as soldiers, men of the mass armies of the sort that appeared in the First World War often required ideals for which to fight, a sense of unity

⁷¹ibid, p.83.

⁷²S. P. Mackenzie, Politics and Military Morale; Current-Affairs and Citizenship education in the British Army, 1914-1950, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992.

and purpose - which in practice could range from not wanting to let down one's pals to a desire to crush Prussian militarism.⁷³

Mackenzie concludes that, with the advent of a "citizen army", the High Command had to think again about army education and that as early as August 1915 some officers, led by Major-General Sir Charles Munro, commanding Third Army, felt that classes should be held to explain to men why they had to keep on fighting.⁷⁴

J. Fuller, writing in 1990,⁷⁵ made many interesting points, concluding that the export of British popular culture to France and Flanders during the Great War was a crucial factor in maintaining high morale. However, Fuller's work was concentrated very narrowly on trench journalism, a factor that will receive little attention in this study as only one Irish battalion, the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles (Young Citizen Volunteers) , appears to have published a trench journal and even this was short lived.⁷⁶

G. D. Sheffield in his unpublished thesis,⁷⁷ makes some useful observations on morale; crucially he has identified the problem in identifying good morale; "it was perfectly possible for a soldier's mood to be poor but his military spirit to be sound. Therefore, in arguing that the morale of the B. E. F. remained fundamentally sound throughout the war, it is not being suggested that soldiers were ecstatically happy all the time. Rather, British soldiers and units remained committed to fighting and winning the war, and this was reflected in their combat performance."⁷⁸ Unfortunately, as this quote also demonstrates, some of Sheffield's statements can be

⁷³ibid, p.3.

⁷⁴ibid, p.6.

⁷⁵J. Fuller, Troop Morale and Popular Culture.

⁷⁶Two issues of this battalion's journal *The Incinerator*, published in May and June 1916, are in the archives of the Somme Heritage Centre, Newtownards. No subsequent issues were published.

⁷⁷G. D. Sheffield, "Officer-man relations : Morale and Discipline in the British army, 1902-22".

⁷⁸ibid, p.65.

too sweeping and based on insufficient material; notably there is a heavy reliance on Brent Wilson's work.

Sheffield's material on Irish units appears to be based solely on secondary material, and sometimes is not referenced at all, for example he notes; "The rout of an Irish battalion on the Somme in September 1916, or the 'bolting' of 9/Cheshires on 24th. March 1918 provide even more dramatic evidence of the failure of the military spirit of specific units at specific times,"⁷⁹ without providing any further references to these events.

A study of previous work on morale and discipline in Indian and West Indian units may seem superfluous to the present work. However, given that T. Denman has argued that Irish troops were often seen as "natives"⁸⁰ and that military law seems to have been more harshly used against colonial troops and the Indian Corps, including the 1st. Battalion, Connaught Rangers which served on the Western Front, 1914-15, this seems necessary.

W. F. Elkins in his article on the mutiny of the British West Indies Regiment in December 1918 suggests that; "The soldiers of the British West Indies Regiment began the national liberation struggle that eventually led to the demise of open colonial rule in most of the British Caribbean."⁸¹ Elkins, by suggesting that British army troops in the Great War could be politically motivated for a nationalist cause, does put forward an interesting thesis which should be tested with reference to Irish troops.

I. F. W. Beckett's work on the Singapore Mutiny of 1915,⁸² is worth mentioning partly as it was the mutiny which resulted in the highest number of executions in the British army during the Great War. Equally, it does illustrate that the

⁷⁹ibid, p.65.

⁸⁰T. Denman, "The Catholic-Irish Soldier in the First World War: The Racial Environment", *Irish Historical Studies*, XXVII, 108, 1991.

⁸¹W. F. Elkins, "A Source of Black Nationalism in the Caribbean: the revolt of the British West Indies Regiment at Taranto, Italy in 1918", *Science and Society*, Spring, 1970, p.103.

⁸²I. F. W. Beckett, "The Singapore Mutiny of February, 1915", *The Journal of the Society of Army Historical Research*, 1985.

British High Command dealt much more seriously with native than white troops, when they were involved in disorders, especially when those disorders resulted in the deaths of white civilians.

Finally, the service of the Indian Corps on the Western Front should be considered. Greenhut's work⁸³ on this force demonstrated that Indian units were badly prepared for service in Europe. This, in itself, led to poor morale, which was further lowered by the lack of reinforcements and lack of replacement officers. Poor morale manifested itself in the Indian Corps in a number of ways, namely, a large number of self inflicted wounds, an unwillingness amongst men to attack and even, desertion to the enemy. Greenhut further suggests that officers in the corps did not report these problems fully to higher authority, concerned that low morale would be seen as a result of poor leadership.

D. Omissi's work on the Indian Army,⁸⁴ includes a very informative section on Indian troops serving on the Western Front. He notes; "the collapse of morale among the Indian soldiers in France in 1915 was at times unusually complete."⁸⁵ Based on censors' reports on Indian troops' letters, Omissi reinforces many of Greenhut's points, concluding that; the distance of the troops from home, the bad weather conditions of Winter 1914/15, the sepoys difficulty in adapting to an industrialised war and troops being returned to the front-line after being severely wounded, a practice without precedent in the Indian army, badly affected morale. He also suggests that self-mutilation, something that was very rare in the British army as a whole, was prevalent in the Indian Corps.⁸⁶ It is also clear from Omissi's work that in March 1915 a group of Afridis from 58th. (Vaughan's) Rifles deserted to the Germans, partly for religious reasons.⁸⁷ Significantly, Omissi has also found that morale in Indian Cavalry

⁸³J. Greenhut, "The Imperial Reserve: The Indian Corps on the Western Front, 1914-15", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 12, 1, 1983.

⁸⁴D. Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj; The Indian Army, 1860-1940*, Macmillan in association with King's College, London, 1994.

⁸⁵ibid, p.114.

⁸⁶ibid, p.119.

⁸⁷ibid, p.121.

Divisions was much higher than that in the Indian infantry units on the Western Front.

Perhaps of more direct relevance to the present work is a consideration of previously published material relating to discipline in Australian, Canadian and New Zealand units during the Great War, especially of those serving on the Western Front. P. Adam-Smith's *The Anzacs*,⁸⁸ while unashamedly a "popular history", does consider, in some detail, disciplinary problems in the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. She mentions the "Wazzir" riots of April 1915 when Australian and New Zealand troops ransacked the red-light district of Cairo. Adam-Smith suggests that there was an attempted official cover up, as the "Battle of Wazzir" was compared to a university rag-day in the official history.⁸⁹ Adam-Smith proceeds to give some details regarding venereal disease amongst A.N.Z.A.C. troops on the Western Front, which is useful, as a soldier contracting a sexually transmitted disease was deemed to have a self inflicted wound, in disciplinary terms. Lastly, the 1918 mutinies amongst Australian infantry units are considered; these occurred when the 37th., 54th. and 59th. Battalions, Australian Imperial Force refused to be amalgamated with other units. This is of particular relevance to the current study as, of course, recruitment problems led to the amalgamation and, later, disbandment of most Irish service battalions.

C. Pugsley's work on the New Zealand units during the First World War,⁹⁰ is particularly illuminating on disciplinary issues as Pugsley was, due to the New Zealand government's more enlightened attitude to public records, able to research New Zealand courts martial years before the files in Britain were released to the general public. Pugsley does make some interesting points relating to discipline, for example, that officers would often resign their commissions to prevent formal disciplinary

⁸⁸P. Adam-Smith, *The Anzacs*, Thomas Nelson Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1978.

⁸⁹ibid, p.54.

⁹⁰C. Pugsley, *On the Fringe of Hell; New Zealanders and Military Discipline in the First World War*, Hodder and Stoughton, Auckland, 1991.

action.⁹¹ He also demonstrates that, after an inauspicious beginning on the Western Front, by the use of strict discipline, the New Zealand Division became one of the most effective units in the British Expeditionary Force by 1918. Also, Pugsley demonstrates that, throughout the war, large numbers of New Zealand troops who were given prison sentences had these suspended. Lastly, he concludes that New Zealand discipline on the Western Front, measured in terms of court martial cases, was much better than that in Australian or Canadian units.

A. Thomson, in his Anzac Memories⁹² does not deal with disciplinary problems in the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps in any detail. However, he does stress that Australian discipline was much laxer than that used in the British Army as a whole and that self-inflicted wounds were a common problem in the Australian Infantry Force.

Very little work has been carried out on disciplinary problems in the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the Great War. However, D. Morton⁹³ has made the point that, for political reasons, the legal position of the Canadian Expeditionary Force changed. In late 1916 it was decided that members of the Canadian units serving on the Western Front would be disciplined under the Canadian Militia Act, rather than the British Army Act. This brought them into line with Australian units which had, since the outbreak of war, been disciplined under the Australian Defence Act of 1903.⁹⁴

As in Britain, work on discipline in continental European armies is relatively sparse. L. V. Smith's book on the French army,⁹⁵ is an excellent case-study of the

⁹¹ibid, p.27.

⁹²A. Thomson, Anzac Memories; Living with the Legend, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994.

⁹³D. Morton, "Exerting Control: The Development of Canadian Authority over the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-19", in C. Archer and T. Travers (eds.), Men at War: Politics, Technology and Innovation in the Twentieth Century, Precedent, Chicago, 1982.

⁹⁴L. C. Jauncey, The Story of Conscription in Australia, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1968, p.28.

⁹⁵L. V. Smith, Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War I, Princetown University Press, Princetown, 1994.

5th. Division during the Great War, based on French primary sources. Smith's work is particularly useful in demonstrating how the French army recovered from the mutinies of 1917. Meanwhile, J. J. Becker's work,⁹⁶ makes some interesting comparisons between military and civilian morale.

The discipline and morale of the German army has equally received little attention, partially due to the destruction of many archives in the Second World War.⁹⁷ W. Deist suggests that post March 1918 German morale began to crack.⁹⁸ By contrast, H. Strachan suggests that the German army faced serious morale problems from at least July 1917, and indeed, in April 1917 introduced a new legal code. This revised disciplinary system reduced maximum sentences for many offences, insuring that, despite increased indiscipline, the German army would not unnecessarily lose manpower.⁹⁹

The most recent work on discipline in the Russian army during the Great War is that of A. K. Wildman.¹⁰⁰ Wildman stresses the links between the Russian army and peasant culture. He also emphasises that the army mutinies of 1917 were spontaneous and certainly not organised by Bolsheviks.

As noted above, most of the work on discipline and morale in the Austro-Hungarian army concentrates on the heterogeneous nature of this army. Therefore the poor discipline of, for example, Czech troops, are highlighted by Cornwall, Plasichka and Jerábek.¹⁰¹ However, none of these authors have

⁹⁶J. J. Becker, *The Great War and the French People*, Berg, Oxford, 1992.

⁹⁷W. Deist, "Le Moral Des Tróupes Allemandes sur le Front Occidetal á la Fin de L' Année 1916", in J. J. Becker, J. M. Winter, G. Krumeich, A. Becker and S. Audoin-Rouzeau (eds.), *Guerre et Cultures, 1914-18*, Armond Colin, Paris, 1994, p.91.

⁹⁸W. Deist, "The German army, the authoritarian nation-state and total war", in J. Horne (ed.), *State, society and mobilisation in Europe*, pp.170-2.

⁹⁹H. Strachan, "The Morale of the German army, 1917-18", in H. Cecil and P. H. Liddle (eds.), *Facing Armageddon*.

¹⁰⁰A. K. Wildman, *The End of the Russian Imperial Army; vol. I, The Old Army and the Soldiers' Revolt (March-April 1917) and vol. II, The Road to Soviet Power and Peace*, Princetown University Press, Princetown, 1980 and 1987.

¹⁰¹M. Cornwall, "Morale and patriotism in the Austro-Hungarian Army", R. Jerábek,

satisfactorily explained how an army, near to collapse in 1914, survived as a reasonably reliable fighting organisation until 1918.

Finally, work has been recently completed on the Italian army in the First World War. In his study of this army, J. Gooch emphasises the brutal nature of discipline, which even included “death by lottery” in units which were perceived to have displayed cowardice in action.¹⁰²

It is also worth considering previously published works on the immediate post war period of 1918-22. This period did see considerable disciplinary problems in the B.E.F. and thus merits some attention, if only to assess why men who had faultlessly obeyed orders during the conflict mutinied soon after the Armistice of November 1918.

The first published works on the post-war mutinies were two, unashamedly left-wing pamphlets.¹⁰³ A. Killick’s work is based solely on his own experiences of the Calais mutiny and initially inspires little confidence as he states that the mutiny took place in 1918, when it actually occurred in 1919. Killick further misrepresents the situation by suggesting that the entire V Corps was sent to suppress the mutiny (in fact less than one division was required) and that this force went over to the mutineers. Lastly, Killick undoubtedly attributes too much political motivation to the strike, for example, in suggesting that the troops in France were waiting for a general strike in Britain before embarking on a full scale mutiny.¹⁰⁴

D. Lamb’s pamphlet relies very heavily on secondary sources. His comment that; “There is little doubt that during the years 1918-20 Britain was near to a social

“The Eastern Front 1914-18”, and R. G. Plaschka, “Contradicting Ideologies: The Pressure of Ideological Conflicts on the Austro-Hungarian Army”.

¹⁰²J. Gooch, “Morale and Discipline in the Italian Army, 1915-18”, in H. Cecil and P. H. Liddle (eds.), *Facing Armageddon*.

¹⁰³A. Killick, *Mutiny! An Account of the Calais Soldiers’ Mutiny in 1918* (this actually occurred in 1919), Militant, Brighton, 1968 and D. Lamb, *Mutinies: 1917-20*, Solidarity, London, no date.

¹⁰⁴A. Killick, *Mutiny!*, p.8.

revolution, much nearer in fact than in the well publicised days of 1926,"¹⁰⁵ does not seem to be borne out by the facts. While the full political bias of this work becomes apparent in what can only be described as a rant against Trades Union leaders, past and present.

The first scholarly contribution on this issue was A. Rothstein's work.¹⁰⁶ Rothstein made the important point that many post war mutinies very closely resembled pre-war industrial strikes. Another important issue which he stressed was that most of the soldiers involved in these "strikes" were not front-line troops. Indeed, most of the men involved were members of the Army Service Corps or Army Ordnance Corps, frequently based in Britain.

While Rothstein does probably over estimate the average British soldiers' political attitude towards allied intervention in Russia, he does make it clear that the strikes were caused by a number of factors. In a comprehensive list drawn up in January 1919, for example, 4,000 men of the Army Service Corps, based at Park Royal in London demanded; 1) speedier demobilisation, 2) reveille to be sounded at 6.30a.m. rather than 5.30a.m., 3) work to finish at 4.30p.m. rather than 5.30p.m., 4) no men over forty-one to be sent overseas, 5) all training to stop, 6) a reduction in guard and picket duty, 7) no compulsory church parade, 8) no drafts to be sent to Russia, 9) a committee of one non commissioned officer and two privates to control messing arrangements for each company, 10) a written guarantee of no victimisation.¹⁰⁷

Dallas and Gill in their 1985 work¹⁰⁸ make some interesting points about the immediate post-war mutinies. They suggest that the Army Ordnance Corps and Army Service Corps units at this time were composed of an unstable mixture of time served infantrymen (many of whom, due to wounds, were no longer medically fit for infantry

¹⁰⁵D. Lamb, *Mutinies*, p.32.

¹⁰⁶A. Rothstein, *The Soldiers' Strikes of 1919*, The Macmillan Press Ltd., London, 1980.

¹⁰⁷*ibid*, p.46.

¹⁰⁸G. Dallas and D. Gill, *The Unknown Army*.

service) and skilled men, often the very last to be conscripted, who were recognised as being more useful in these units than the front line. They also make the point that while some troops supported left-wing political demands, the Labour movement in Britain offered them little support.

D. Morton and J. Putkowski's work,¹⁰⁹ relating to the Canadian Expeditionary Force in the immediate post-war period has also shown that mutinies resulted from a number of political and material issues. While there was some socialist agitation, the major problems which sparked the most serious Canadian military disturbance, at Kinmel Park were; the mismanagement of demobilisation, cold and uncomfortable barracks and high prices in the camp shops. In addition, the officers' lack of attention to their men, and the failure to organise group activities worsened the situation.

Irish troops do not seem to have been involved in these demobilisation riots or "strikes". However, even more seriously, the 1st. Battalion, Connaught Rangers mutinied at Jullundur, India, in July 1920. Two books have been published on this incident¹¹⁰ and it merits attention in this thesis, as in assessing morale in the Irish Regiments between 1914 and 1918, it is important to consider the extent to which Sinn Fein was gathering support from Irish troops.

S. Pollock suggested that the mutiny took place mainly as new recruits sent out to the battalion from Britain brought with them lurid tales of the "Black and Tan" atrocities being committed in Ireland. Pollock thus saw the mutiny as being inspired almost totally by political motives. However, Babington pointed to some material factors, which along with Sinn Fein sympathy, inspired the mutiny. He concluded that poor officer-man relations and the lack of organised activities for other ranks had much to do with the outbreak of the mutiny. Nevertheless, Babington does note that

¹⁰⁹D. Morton, "'Kicking and Complaining': Demobilisation Riots in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1918-19", *Canadian Historical Review*, 61, 1980 and J. Putkowski, *The Kinmel Park Camp Riots 1919*, Flintshire Historical Society, Clwyd, 1989.

¹¹⁰A. Babington, *The Devil to Pay: The Mutiny of the Connaught Rangers, India, 1920*, Leo Cooper, London, 1991 and S. Pollock, *Mutiny for the Cause*, Sphere Books Ltd., London, 1971.

there were also fears relating to Sinn Fein agitation in the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment; 1st. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers; and the Irish Guards at this time.¹¹¹ Both authors, writing on the Connaught Rangers stress that the ringleaders were men who had recently joined the battalion, rather than Great War veterans.

Disaffection in Irish regiments as a whole in the 1918-22 period is considered in much greater detail by Keith Jeffery. In his work, he notes that Sinn Fein infiltration of Irish units was generally unsuccessful, whether the units concerned were stationed in the United Kingdom, Silesia or India.¹¹²

To turn, now, to a consideration of previously published material on Ireland and the Great War, as noted at the start of this introduction, in Irish terms the Great War has become a “political event” in sharp contrast to the experience in the rest of the British Isles. As K. Jeffery has highlighted,¹¹³ even the erection of War Memorials in 1920s Ireland became a subject of heated political controversy. This popular perception of the war flowed over easily into the academic sphere. C. Falls’ work on the 36th. (Ulster) Division was inspired as much by the Ulster Unionist Council’s desire to demonstrate the loyalty of Northern Protestants to the British Crown as by a desire to record the wartime services of the division.¹¹⁴ Equally B. Cooper’s history of the 10th. (Irish) Division¹¹⁵ was firmly Nationalist in tone.

This neglect of Ireland’s role in the war saw some terrible misconceptions and intriguing conspiracy theories appear in Irish historical works. For example, R. Kee stated;

¹¹¹A. Babington, *The Devil to Pay*, p.85.

¹¹²K. Jeffery, “The Irish military tradition and the British Empire”, in K. Jeffery (ed.), *“An Irish Empire?” Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1996, pp. 115-118.

¹¹³K. Jeffery, “The Great War in Modern Irish Memory”, in T. G. Fraser and K. Jeffery (eds.), *Men, Women and War*, Lilliput Press, Dublin, 1993 and K. Jeffery, “Irish Culture and the Great War”, *Bullán*, 1, 2, 1994, pp.88-90.

¹¹⁴C. Falls, *The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division*, pp.XIII-XIV.

¹¹⁵B. Cooper, *The Tenth (Irish) Division*.

Redmond had fought hard, often in the teeth of War Office and regular Army Unionist dislike of southern Irish nationalists, to give a specifically, Irish National flavour to Ireland's contribution to recruiting. There had been a tendency at first to disperse southern Irishmen, who wanted to enlist, into English regiments rather than let them concentrate in their own units.' This was in marked contrast to the treatment given to the Ulster Volunteer Force who were at once allowed to form their own Ulster Division of the British Army with distinctive badges and emblems. But eventually, thanks to Redmond's pressure, there was formed, in addition to the regular 10th. (Irish) Division stationed at the Curragh, a third Irish Division (the 16th.) with headquarters at Cork and Tipperary.¹¹⁶

This statement demonstrates an almost complete lack of knowledge about British army recruitment policy during the Great War and portrays the War Office as distinctly pro-Unionist, which, under Kitchener's leadership, it certainly was not.¹¹⁷ Lastly, and most bizarrely, Kee dubs the 10th. (Irish) Division "regular" when it was one of the first New Army divisions!

Kee may be excused some of these inaccuracies as not only was his work unashamedly pro-Nationalist in tone, but it was a broad survey work. M. Laffin cannot be so easily excused for writing;

Redmond urged Irish Volunteers to join the British army and fight in Flanders, but his goodwill was not reciprocated by Kitchener and the War Office. The army's unionist sympathies were reflected in the prompt formation of an Ulster division comprising former members of the Ulster

¹¹⁶R. Kee, The Green Flag, volume II, The Bold Fenian Men, Quartet Books, London, 1981, pp.228-9.

¹¹⁷See, for example, details of a rather stormy interview between Sir Edward Carson and Lord Kitchener, over the employment of the Ulster Volunteer Force in H. Montgomery Hyde, Carson, Constable, London, 1974, p.378.

Volunteers; its long-standing dislike of Irish nationalists was revealed in a policy of dispersing Irish recruits throughout British regiments rather than forming them into an Irish brigade as urged by Redmond. The Ulster division was not sent to the front until October 1915 and sceptical nationalists believed it was being protected and kept out of danger.¹¹⁸

One would not imagine from reading this that the 10th. (Irish) or 16th. (Irish) Divisions or the Irish regular battalions of the British army had ever existed.

Thankfully, in recent years, the First World War has begun to enter the mainstream of Irish history, particularly through the revisionist work of R. F. Foster, who has commented;

The First World War should be seen as one of the most decisive events in modern Irish history. Politically speaking, it temporarily diffused the Ulster situation, it put Home Rule on ice; it altered the conditions of military crisis in Ireland at a stroke; and it created a rationale for an I.R.B. rebellion. Economically, it created a spectacular boom in agricultural prices, and high profits in agriculturally derived industries; though urban workers were less advantaged, and there was much resentment at the imposition of production quotas and the enforcement of tillage rather than pasture farming.

The War also accounted for a great outflow of recruits; about 150,000 were in active service by April 1916, and over 200,000 had enlisted by the end. Town labourers predominated over agricultural labourers, often encouraged by unemployment at home, and the prospect of a generous separation allowance for their families; Belfast provided a high proportion, for reasons of proletarianization as much as Protestantism.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸M. Laffin, The Partition of Ireland, 1911-1925, Historical Association of Ireland, Dundalk, 1994, p.50.

¹¹⁹R. F. Foster, Modern Ireland, 1600-1972, Penguin Books, London, 1989, p.471.

Despite this new recognition of the importance of the Great War to Irish history; historians working on the First World War and Ireland still form something of a “cottage industry”. The most prolific is T. Denman who has published widely on the 10th. (Irish) and 16th. (Irish) Divisions and the military career of William Redmond. His work varies greatly in quality and, of course, in relevance to the present work. His first book, Ireland’s Unknown Soldiers¹²⁰ was a well written and researched piece of work, which was all the more important as it was the first published history of the 16th. (Irish) Division. Of particular interest, with reference to the study of discipline and morale is his chapter on the German Spring Offensive, entitled “21 March 1918: Fight or Flight?” He concludes that, while the 16th. Division was clearly overwhelmed, this was a result of tactical errors, rather than poor morale;

On 21 March 1918 the 16th. Division was, at the insistence of senior officers, holding its advanced line in heavy strength. It was a division which had been in the line for several months and was desperately tired. It had undergone a massive restructuring of its order of battle only weeks before. It was a division in need of training; and one defending a salient with a glaring tactical weak spot, of which the divisional commander and staff - the 16th. Division had a “rotten staff”, Nightingale believed - were aware but had done little to rectify. With six dispersed battalions it had fought the best part of three (six if we include second-line formations) German divisions.¹²¹

Denman also made clear the 16th. (Irish) Division’s manning problems, for example noting that 250 men of the Jersey Militia were incorporated into the 7th. Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles by Spring 1915 to bring the battalion up to strength. Denman further notes that, when the division was reconstituted in July 1918

¹²⁰T. Denman, Ireland’s Unknown Soldiers.

¹²¹ibid, p.170.

it contained only one Irish battalion, the 5th. Royal Irish Fusiliers, the strength being made up with one Welsh, five English and two Scottish battalions.¹²²

T. Denman's article, "The Catholic Irish Soldier in the First World War"¹²³ also provides some interesting views on the position of the Irish soldier in the British army which relate to morale and discipline, concluding that there were 'racist' attitudes to the Irish Regiments in the British High Command, for example, in believing that, like certain colonial troops, they were reckless in attack, but prone to indiscipline and lacking intellect. This is a concept which the current author has some difficulty with: to compare the Irish in the British army with the Senegalese in the French army, as Denman does,¹²⁴ is surely taking the concept of a "Colonial" relationship between Britain and Ireland too far. Nevertheless, this may be worth considering at a later date, especially if Irish disciplinary records are glaringly different to their English, Scottish or Welsh counterparts.

Denman's work on the 10th. (Irish) Division,¹²⁵ concludes in 1915 and is concerned only with the 10th. Division at Gallipoli, thus it is of little relevance to the present work. Another article by Denman,¹²⁶ gives an interesting insight into morale and discipline in an Irish service battalion through the eyes of a temporary officer, based on Captain Staniforth's papers held in the Imperial War Museum.

Unfortunately, in recent years, Denman's material has started to decline in its academic standards. His work on William Redmond,¹²⁷ the Irish Parliamentary Party Member of Parliament, who became a Major in the 16th. (Irish) Division, provides few

¹²²ibid, p.172. However, in a letter to History Ireland, Spring 1995, p.10, Denman seemed to repudiate this, stating, rather bizarrely; "As I said in my book on the 16th. (Irish) Division, the formation's infantry (as distinct from its supporting arms) was always largely Catholic Irish."

¹²³T. Denman, "The Catholic Irish Soldier in the First World War".

¹²⁴ibid, p.364.

¹²⁵T. Denman, "The 10th. (Irish) Division 1914-15: A Study in Military and Political Interaction", Irish Sword, XVII, 66, 1987.

¹²⁶T. Denman, "An Irish Battalion at War: From the letters of Captain J. H. M. Staniforth, 7th. Leinsters, 1914-18", Irish Sword, XVII, ??

¹²⁷T. Denman, A Lonely Grave: The Life and Death of William Redmond, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 1995.

insights into how Redmond and the Irish National Volunteers as a whole adapted to life in the British army or to what extent his military and political positions conflicted with each other. Denman's basic premise, that we should remember that Irish Nationalists, as well as Ulster Unionists fought in the war, is not new and, indeed, twelve years before Denman's work was published, J. B. Lyons,¹²⁸ had examined the career of an Irish Nationalist M.P. who joined the British Army on the outbreak of the Great War.

David Fitzpatrick's work on Ireland during the war has provided some valuable insights into the Irish home front and recruitment during the war. His Politics and Irish Life,¹²⁹ while focused exclusively on Co. Clare, does make a number of important points about the changing perceptions towards the Army in Ireland between 1914-18, and the decision to remove Special Reserve units of the Irish Regiments from Ireland in 1918. Fitzpatrick's article relating to the Great War¹³⁰ provides interesting material on Irish recruitment and especially on the enlistment of Irish and Ulster Volunteers into the British Army. Lastly, the volume of undergraduate essays which Fitzpatrick edited,¹³¹ has chapters by P. Codd, "Recruiting and Responses to the War in Wexford", J. Leonard, "The Catholic Chaplaincy" and D. Lindsay, "Labour Against Conscription", which are all of some relevance to the current study.

Philip Orr's work on the Ulster Division,¹³² made excellent use of oral history. Unfortunately, the author made few enquires with specific regard to discipline or morale in the Division and, following the recent fascination amongst "popular" historians with the Battle of the Somme, said little about the Division's experiences

¹²⁸J. B. Lyons, The Enigma of Tom Kettle, Irish Patriot, Essayist, Poet, British Soldier, 1880-1916, Glendale Press, Dublin, 1983.

¹²⁹D. Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921; Provincial Experience of War and Revolution, Gill and Macmillan Ltd., Dublin, 1977.

¹³⁰D. Fitzpatrick, "The Logic of Collective Sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army, 1914-1918", Historical Journal, 38, 4, 1995, especially p.1028.

¹³¹D. Fitzpatrick (ed.), Ireland and the First World War.

¹³²P. Orr, The Road to the Somme.

after the 1st. July 1916. The oral history format was again used by G. S. Mitchell,¹³³ in his study of the 10th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. While there is, again, no specific consideration of morale and discipline factors in this unit, the book is a useful study of an Irish service battalion during the Great War. A similar problem with both of these books was, of course, that by the late 1980s there were very few survivors of the First World war left to be interviewed and one could question just how representative their experiences were of the battalion or division as a whole.

T. Johnstone's work,¹³⁴ offered some new material; its basic premise being that the service of all Irishmen, Protestant or Catholic, regular, Special Reserve or New Army, serving in whatever theatres of war between 1914-1918 should be recognised. Unfortunately, Johnstone's study, like Harris' earlier work,¹³⁵ relies much too heavily on regimental histories published in the 1920s and therefore offers few insights into morale and disciplinary problems in the Irish regiments or the link between political changes in Ireland and disaffection in the Irish units.

M. Dungan's work,¹³⁶ again makes use of oral history, largely from the Radio Telefais Eirann sound archive. Unfortunately, it offers few new interpretations of Irish troops' role in the First World War and includes some rather unfocused comments relating to Irish men in the Australian Imperial Force. Equally, topics such as the political activism of Irish troops and discipline, while initially promised by Dungan in his first book on the Great War,¹³⁷ mysteriously failed to appear in the companion volume. Nevertheless, given R.T.E.s less than helpful attitude to researchers, Dungan's work is, at least, useful in bringing material from the R.T.E. sound archives to public attention.

¹³³G. S. Mitchell, Three Cheers for the Derrys!, Yes! Publications, Derry, 1991.

¹³⁴T. Johnstone, Orange, Green and Khaki.

¹³⁵H. E. D. Harris, The Irish Regiments in the First World War, Mercier Press, Dublin, 1968.

¹³⁶M. Duggan, Irish Voices from the Great War, and They Shall Grow Not Old.

¹³⁷M. Dungan, Irish Voices from the Great War, p.9.

The last published pieces of work which need to be considered in this survey are N. Perry's recent articles.¹³⁸ In this work, Perry considers the strains that the Great War put on the regimental system in Ireland in the faces of high losses and low recruitment levels. He concludes that Irish service battalions were disbanded more readily than their English, Scottish or Welsh counterparts,¹³⁹ and that, while Irish units had to accept large numbers of non-Irish personnel, the Black Watch and Seaforth Highlanders, themselves facing severe manning problems, recruited heavily in Belfast. Perry's work also demonstrates the difficult relationship between the military authorities and Irish political leaders throughout the war over recruiting difficulties. However, Perry, like Denman, clearly has some difficulty in acknowledging the fact that, by the end of the war, due to dilution, most Irish units contained very large numbers of non-Irish personnel, concluding; "In summary, then, Irish units and formations did retain their Irish identities, and at any given stage of the war were likely to be at least as representative in terms of regional identity as most other units in the British Army."¹⁴⁰

Before moving on to the outline of this thesis, unpublished work which has been completed on Irish units in the Great War must be considered. M. T. Foy's thesis,¹⁴¹ unsurprisingly deals mainly with the pre-August 1914 situation and organisation of the Ulster Volunteer Force. Nevertheless he does make it clear that, despite post war Unionist claims to the contrary, the Ulster Unionist leadership had severe qualms about letting the entire U.V.F. leave Ireland while the Home Rule issue remained unresolved, indeed, as late as April 1915 there were still 62,000 men in the

¹³⁸N. Perry, "Nationality in the Irish Infantry Regiments in the First World War", *War and Society*, XII, 1, 1994 and "Maintaining Regimental Identity in the Great War: The Case of the Irish Infantry Regiments", *Stand To*, 52, 1998.

¹³⁹N. Perry, "Nationality in the Irish Infantry Regiments", p.74.

¹⁴⁰ibid, p.89.

¹⁴¹M. T. Foy, "The Ulster Volunteer Force: Its Domestic Development and Political Importance in the Period 1913 to 1920", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1986.

U.V.F. armed with 54,000 rifles.¹⁴² Foy further suggests that the U.V.F. wanted a coastal defence role, in line with what had originally been envisaged for the Territorial Force in the event of war. Indeed, by January 1915 a scheme had been drawn up by which U.V.F. units would defend the Antrim and Down coastlines and Belfast harbour and City in the event of a German raid or invasion.¹⁴³

I. Maxwell's thesis on Sir Wilfrid Spender,¹⁴⁴ should also be mentioned at this point. Unfortunately this work is very slight on Spender's service as G.S.O.2 of the 36th. (Ulster) Division from September 1914 to July 1916, and strangely says nothing about his frequent disputes with his superiors, partly due to his pre-war U.V.F. involvement or his, in some cases unbelievably indiscreet, correspondence with Sir James Craig and Sir Edward Carson.¹⁴⁵

P. Callan's thesis,¹⁴⁶ is very useful in demonstrating the efforts that were made to keep Irish units up to strength. He also demonstrates the political difficulties in forming the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions and the tensions between pre-August 1914 volunteer officers (whether from the U.V.F. or Irish Volunteers) and regular army officers. With particular reference to this work, Callan does give some examples of Sinn Fein infiltration into Irish units, for example; "Captain Terance Poulter, a Royal Dublin Fusilier, who fought to suppress the rising, described why his unit was speedily moved from Ireland, 'The (Longford) I.R.A. had joined the 11th. battalion *en masse*. One night, they had brought up a barge along the canal behind the barracks. Two hundred rifles were taken, every rifle in the barracks,..., and neither they nor the rifles were ever seen again. That night the decision was taken to bring

¹⁴²ibid, p.210.

¹⁴³ibid, p.211.

¹⁴⁴I. L. Maxwell, "The Life of Sir Wilfrid Spender, 1876-1960", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1991.

¹⁴⁵See Spender's correspondence at P.R.O.N.I., D,1295/3/1-13 for examples of this.

¹⁴⁶P. Callan, "Voluntary Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland during the First World War", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University College, Dublin, 1984.

every Irish regiment out of Ireland, and relocate them in Scotland,..., We only came back to disband for ever.”¹⁴⁷

M. Staunton's work on the Royal Munster Fusiliers,¹⁴⁸ despite using the traditional framework of a regimental history, does fully embrace the “War and Society” school of military history. Therefore his thesis considers, in some depth, the experiences of the Munster home front during the war, recruitment, and, in a section particularly relevant to the current work “Morale, Politics and Religion” he makes some valid points relating to the politicisation of the regiment in late 1917 and 1918 by Sinn Fein activists. Staunton concludes that, while there was some Sinn Fein sympathy in the regiment; “Like most Irish servicemen, Royal Munster Fusilier soldiers continued to espouse the cause of Redmond during a period which saw the growth of support for Sinn Fein”.¹⁴⁹ He does, however, suggest that Irish units on the Western Front were distrusted by other units by early 1918 as they were seen as active Sinn Feiners.¹⁵⁰

One final piece of unpublished work which must be mentioned is L. S. Lemisko's M. A. thesis, regarding the 16th. (Irish) Division.¹⁵¹ Lemisko's work, while weak on the formation and training of the division, makes important points relating to Irish soldiers on the Western Front, especially during the German Spring Offensive of 1918. Lemisko concludes that, generally, discipline in the 16th. (Irish) Division compared favourably with that of other B.E.F. divisions.

Having considered previous work relating to discipline and morale, it is now important to outline how this topic will be developed. In particular an outline of the

¹⁴⁷*Irish Times*, 24/4/84, cited in P. Callan, *ibid*, p.267. This incident allegedly took place in Co. Longford in November 1917.

¹⁴⁸M. Staunton, “The Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Great War, 1914-19”, unpublished M.A. thesis, University College, Dublin, 1986.

¹⁴⁹*ibid*, p.200.

¹⁵⁰*ibid*, p.203.

¹⁵¹L. S. Lemisko, “Politics, Performance and Morale: 16 (Irish) Division 1914-18”, unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Calgary, 1992. A useful summary of Lemisko's conclusions has appeared as, L. S. Lemisko, “Morale in the 16th. (Irish) Division, 1916-18”, *Irish Sword*, XX, 81, 1997.

rationale behind examining the sample units which have been chosen for examination in depth, must be given, along with how morale and discipline can be evaluated and the links between civilian and military morale during the Great War. Having considered these issues an outline of the various chapters which will comprise the thesis, will be provided.

This work will rely heavily on the courts martial papers,¹⁵² held at the Public Record Office, Kew, to evaluate morale and discipline in the B.E.F.. However, as there were over 50,000 courts martial cases heard on the Western Front between 1914 and 1918 a sample is clearly required. Sampling the British army during the Great War is a notoriously difficult practice, basically as there is no such entity as a "typical" division. It has therefore been decided to concentrate heavily on Irish units serving on the Western Front.¹⁵³ Thus the courts martial details of all men tried while serving in Irish units on the Western Front have been detailed in a database (see appendices 4 and 6). In addition to this and for comparative purposes, courts martial in sample Irish units on home service have been compiled in a separate database (see appendices 4 and 8). Likewise the courts martial records of five Irish battalions have been detailed in another database. This database covers these units service in other theatres of war, namely Gallipoli, Salonika and the Middle East (see appendices 4 and 7).

Given these disparities between the "Irish" and "British" experiences of the First World War, outlined earlier in the introduction, a number of non-Irish infantry units will be included in the courts martial database sample. Very crudely, the B.E.F.'s infantry can be divided into six distinct components and an example of each will be examined. Firstly, there are the regular infantry units, in this context the 87th. infantry brigade (i.e., the 1st. Battalions, King's Own Scottish Borderers, Border Regiment and Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and the 2nd. Battalion, South Wales Borderers) of the 29th. Division will be examined.

¹⁵²See the following series, P.R.O., WO71, WO81, WO83, WO84, WO86, WO90, WO93 and WO213.

¹⁵³See appendix 1 for full details of the wartime services of the Irish units.

Secondly, the New Army Divisions raised directly by the War Office can be seen as a distinct entity within the British Expeditionary Force. In this category the entire 16th. (Irish) Division will be considered, along with one battalion of the 45th. infantry brigade of the 15th. (Scottish) Division (namely, the 6th. Battalion, Cameron Highlanders). Thirdly, New Army "Pals" formations must be considered and for this the 26th. Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers, 34th. Division will be used. Lastly, as far as the New Army Divisions are concerned, there are units which were formed with political overtones, obviously the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions will be examined in this context but, in addition the 14th. Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, 38th. (Welsh) Division will be considered.

Lastly, the Territorial Force infantry divisions can be clearly divided into two groups. The first line units, of which the 1/14th. Battalion, London (Scottish) Regiment and the 6th. Battalion, Gordon Highlanders of the 51st. (Highland) Division will be used for sampling purposes; and the second line units, of which the 2/6th. Battalion, Sherwood Foresters of the 59th. (Second, West Riding) Division will serve as an example. The only non-British unit to be examined will be the 1st. Battalion, Australian Imperial Force, 1st. Australian Division.

This sample is clearly not a cross section of the British Expeditionary Force either in regional terms or arms of service as it concentrates heavily on infantry units from the "Celtic Fringe" of Britain and this requires some explanation. To begin with the regional question, a recent conference,¹⁵⁴ demonstrated that the concept of the "Celtic Fringe" can meaningfully be applied during the First World War. By comparing Irish units with their Scottish or Welsh counterparts, the intention is, as far as is possible, to try to compare like with like. In military terms, the introduction of conscription does somewhat undermine the "Celtic Fringe" similarities, but at the same time Irish troops were seen as having much more in common with their Scottish than

¹⁵⁴"The Great War and the Celtic Fringe", organised by Ms. Jane Leonard at the Queen's University of Belfast, April, 1995.

their English counterparts. Indeed, in 1918, Sir Edward Carson suggested that an amalgamation between the 36th. (Ulster) and 51st. (Highland) Divisions would be more acceptable to the men in both Divisions than the amalgamation of the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions.¹⁵⁵ Equally, Irish, Scots, and Welsh units all had difficulty in retaining their national composition during the war, in terms of replacements. Therefore it seems much more sensible to compare the Irish units largely with Scots and Welsh units with similar characteristics, while a comparison solely with troops recruited from England would be much less enlightening. Equally, the use of the 1st. Battalion, Australian Imperial Force as representative of all overseas units is rather unfair. However, the fact that the Australians, like the Irish, had a reputation for being both excellent fighting troops and poorly disciplined, accounts for this choice.

As regards the over-concentration on infantry and cavalry units, this has been carried out for practical, rather than theoretical reasons. For example, if a member of the 174th. company, Army Service Corps, attached to the 36th. (Ulster) Division was court martialled, he would simply be listed in the records as a member of the Army Service Corps, without his unit or division being given. This also occurs with the Royal Field Artillery, Royal Garrison Artillery, Labour Corps, Royal Tank Corps, Royal Flying Corps, Royal Engineers and Royal Army Medical Corps personnel, which unfortunately makes a comparison between front line and rear area troops impossible, without the construction of a much larger database, which would be beyond the possibilities of this thesis.

Again, the fashion in which the courts martial records are kept makes a thematic approach to the topic of discipline and morale virtually impossible. For example, if a soldier is found guilty of section 7A of the Army Act for “mutiny and insubordination”, it is unclear whether his crime was politically motivated, let alone if

¹⁵⁵N. Perry, “Nationality in the Irish Infantry Regiments”.

it was inspired by militant Labour or Sinn Fein sympathies.¹⁵⁶ Thus, with the exception of chapter two, "The Administration of British Military Justice, 1914 to 1918", the thesis will follow a chronological outline.

Chapter one will consider the issue of discipline and morale in the British army and Irish paramilitary forces, c.1902-14. Irish soldiers in the British army were always viewed with some suspicion and this chapter will consider this issue with reference to the non-establishment of Territorial Force or National Reserve units in Ireland in 1908. Equally, the pressures put on Irish soldiers (especially Special Reservists) by the Home Rule controversy and labour unrest will be considered in detail.

In broader terms, it was clear to many officers that the development of modern weapons meant that high casualties were inevitable in a future war. Against this background it was felt that high morale would be required among attacking troops. Therefore doctrinal thought in the British army during this period will receive some attention.

Finally, the two main paramilitary forces in Ireland (the Ulster Volunteer Force and Irish Volunteers) contributed large numbers of recruits to the British army during the Great War. It is, therefore, worth considering the pre-war training, *esprit d' corps* and morale and discipline of these formations.

In chapter two of the thesis the operation of British military law, in its widest context, will be considered. Previous authors, as outlined above, have suggested that the First World War courts martial system operated in an unfair and arbitrary manner. The release of the Judge Advocate General's office papers and courts martial files from this period means that this view needs to be radically reassessed. In particular, the role of the Judge Advocate General's office in reducing or quashing sentences will be considered. In addition, the point must be made that, in many respects, British military courts during the Great War, were no more arbitrary than their civilian

¹⁵⁶War Office, Manual of Military Law 1914, H.M.S.O., London, 1914, pp.384-5.

counterparts, especially in minor cases which, in civilian society would have been adjudicated on by magistrates.

Chapter three considers the experience of units of the B.E.F. in France from August 1914 to September 1915. This chapter considers how well Irish battalions adapted to service on the Western Front in disciplinary terms and the links between casualties and the number of courts martial cases. The establishment of Sir Roger Casement's Irish Brigade will also be considered in this chapter as will the disciplinary and morale problems faced by the B.E.F. in the Winter of 1914/15.

In chapter four, the formation and training of the 10th. (Irish), 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions will be considered. This chapter will focus on the mutinies and general indiscipline which took place in these formations during their training in the United Kingdom. The officering of these New Army divisions will also be considered in detail as it appears that many officers, especially in the 36th. (Ulster) Division received their appointments due to political involvement rather than military skills. Finally, consideration will be given to the methods used to develop and maintain morale in these units.

Chapter five considers the disciplinary problems faced by Irish units on the Western Front from October 1915 to September 1916. While it does appear that, by this time, the discipline of Irish regular battalions had improved, the situation regarding Irish New Army formations was very different. It appears that the training of the 36th. (Ulster) Division was deficient, with discipline in the 107th. Infantry Brigade suffering as a result of this. The situation in the 16th. (Irish) Division is more difficult to assess, but appears to have been broadly similar. In this chapter consideration will be given as to how Irish discipline compared to that of the B.E.F. as a whole, especially in the wake of the Easter Rising.

Chapter six considers discipline and morale in Irish battalions on the Western Front from October 1916 to February 1918. During this period, Irish units, like those of the B.E.F. as a whole, were faced with high casualty rates and the arrival of conscripts. This period also saw a bewildering number of amalgamations between,

and the reduction of some, Irish battalions. In some cases, for example, the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles and 9th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, battalions appear to have been disbanded due to disciplinary rather than recruiting problems. This chapter will also consider the growing concern amongst politicians and senior military figures over the reliability of Irish regiments as a whole, which was demonstrated by the removal of Irish Special Reserve units from Ireland in late 1917 and early 1918.

Finally, chapter seven will consider disciplinary problems in Irish battalions on the Western Front between March and November 1918. In particular, the performance of the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions during the German Spring Offensive will be assessed. Equally, the deployment of battalions of the 10th. (Irish) Division on the Western Front and the reconstruction of the 16th. Division, post March 1918, will be considered. Finally, attention will be given to the so-called "Hundred Days", immediately proceeding the Armistice.

This thesis also contains nine appendices. Appendix one simply details the wartime service of the Irish regiments during the Great War. Appendix two details the wartime service of the non-Irish units included in the database project. The third appendix details cases in which men were convicted of mutiny, while serving in the British army during the First World War. Appendix four provides an introduction to the database project and includes a list of the abbreviations and the sample units used in the project. The databases compiled in researching this thesis have been printed out and attached as appendices.

Thus appendix five details men tried by court martial while serving in Irish battalions based in the United Kingdom between the 1st. August 1913 and 31st. July 1914: while details relating to officers serving in Irish units in India, who were tried by courts martial during this period have been included, details of other ranks tried by court martial in India during 1913 and 1914 were not uncovered during this research. Appendix six lists men tried by courts martial while serving in Irish units on the Western Front between 4th. August 1914 and 11th. November 1918. Appendix seven

gives details of men serving in a sample number of Irish units, which served in theatres of war other than the Western Front. Meanwhile, appendix eight lists men tried by court martial, who served in a sample number of Irish units based in the United Kingdom during the First World War. Finally, appendix nine gives details of men tried by court martial, while serving in a sample number of non-Irish units on the Western Front, between the 4th. August 1914 and 11th. November 1918.

Chapter 1.

Discipline and Morale in the British Army and Irish Paramilitary Forces, c.1902 to 1914.

Before considering discipline and morale in the British Expeditionary Force during the Great War, it is important to reflect on the importance of these factors in the British army during the 1902-14 period. These twelve years, from the end of the Boer War to the outbreak of the First World War, saw major changes both in British military thought and the organisation of the British army. Equally, the position of the Irish regiments in the British army changed in this period; they were seen as more trustworthy in the aftermath of the Boer War, before new doubts were cast on them over the relationship of some Irish soldiers to the Ulster Volunteer Force. The politicisation of the army, generally, in these years, most notably over the Curragh Incident of March 1914 demands attention, as does the disciplinary and morale problems faced by troops called out in aid of the civil power during this period. Lastly, the issues of discipline and morale in the various paramilitary groups which developed in Ireland after 1911 will be considered as, ultimately, many of the men in these ranks were to serve in the British armed forces during the Great War.

British military thought in this period was not as firmly developed as its counterparts in European armies, and indeed, as two historians have noted, the British army did not actually possess a coherent doctrine when war broke out in August 1914.¹ This had partly to do with the spirit of anti-intellectualism of the British officer corps,² which was to some extent shown in the educational backgrounds of army officers. During the pre-war period many were still entering the army through the militia, rather than the

¹S. Bidwell and D. Graham, Fire-Power, British Army Weapons and Theories of War 1904-1945, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1982, p.15.

²ibid, p.19.

more intellectually demanding Royal Military College (R.M.C.). For example, a record of officers serving in the 4th. Royal Irish Dragoon Guards between 1909 and 1913 shows that, while 18 came from the R.M.C., eight had joined the regiment from a militia or yeomanry unit and one from a colonial unit.³ In the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, during the same period, the picture was somewhat similar. While 35 officers had entered the battalion through the R.M.C., 16 came from the "old militia", four from the Special Reserve, one from the Territorial Force and one by a direct commission.⁴ There were, of course, other methods of entry, the officer training given by which is more debatable. In the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, one officer serving in this period was commissioned from the ranks, one had come directly from a public school and two directly from University.⁵ In the 4th. Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, four officers serving in the 1909-13 period had been commissioned from the ranks and two directly from University.⁶

Similar patterns are apparent in officers serving in the 1st. Battalion, Leinster Regiment between 1906 and 1915: 44 had passed through the R.M.C., 27 come from the old militia, 3 from the Special Reserve, four from the ranks, five directly from University and one directly from a public school. In addition one officer in the regiment had gained his commission by the least intellectually taxing method of all, being nominated by a Colonial Governor.⁷

There is also some evidence to suggest that the officer corps was a second option for some men who were not intelligent enough to pursue another career. For example, in the 1st. Battalion, Leinster Regiment, nine officers who held commissions during the 1906-15 period had attended University (two at Trinity College, Dublin, three at Oxford,

³P.R.O., WO76/2, "Record of Officers' Service, 4th. Royal Irish Dragoon Guards".

⁴P.R.O., WO76/25, "Record of Officers' Service, 2/Royal Irish Regiment".

⁵P.R.O., WO76/25, "Record of Officers' Service, 2/Royal Irish Regiment".

⁶P.R.O., WO76/2, "Record of Officers' Service, 4th. Royal Irish Dragoon Guards".

⁷All details from, P.R.O., WO76/24, "Record of Officers' Service, 1/Leinster Regiment".

two at Cambridge, one at London and one at Edinburgh). Of these, four apparently failed to graduate.⁸ For such men, a brief spell in the intellectually undemanding militia provided a convenient “back door” into a profession in the army, when their own educational achievement barred other professions to them.

Conversely, the Victorian experiences of the British army, by no means redundant in the 1902-14 period when the British army had still, amongst other duties, to act as a colonial police force, had encouraged British officers to adopt a pragmatic view of future conflicts as opposed to the grand doctrines developed by their European counterparts. As G. Harries-Jenkins points out;

These differences between these small wars and conventional warfare were clearly summed up by Captain C. E. (later Major-General Sir Charles) Callwell in 1896. He suggested, on the basis of the experience gained by the Victorian Army in campaigns fought from Canada to the Cape and from Pekin[g?] to Ashanti, that in small wars, ‘conditions are so diversified, the enemy’s mode of fighting is often so peculiar, the theatre of operations presents such irregular features, that irregular warfare must be carried out in a method totally different from the stereotyped system.’ Since these were the actions in which, with the solitary exception of the Crimea, the British Army had been involved from Waterloo onwards, such differences had a profound effect on the development of military professionalism. This was particularly noticeable in the reaction of the officer corps to the study of theory, for it was considered that this often bore little relationship to what happened in practice.⁹

⁸P.R.O., WO76/24, “Record of Officers’ Service, 1/Leinster Regiment”.

⁹G. Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1977, p.184.

Furthermore many British officers, in 1914, unlike their French or German counterparts had first hand experience of battle conditions and felt that this negated overlong consideration of theory. For example, of the 92 officers serving in the 1st. Battalion, Leinster Regiment between 1906 and 1913, 45 had been on active service.¹⁰ In the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, of the 65 officers serving between 1909 and 1913, 26 had similar battle experience.¹¹ While, of the 42 officers serving in the 4th. Royal Irish Dragoon Guards during the same years, 13 had experienced active service.¹²

Nevertheless, like other armies, the British did theorise over a problem which became increasingly apparent, especially in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. This was essentially the problem of the offensive; with the development of the magazine rifle, machine gun and fast firing artillery pieces, how could an attack best be carried out?

The French responded to this problem by adopting the "cult of the offensive."¹³ This 'cult' expounded the concept that despite the development of modern weapons, an assault could still be successful, providing troops' morale was high. Major Grandmaison, a leading French exponent of the offensive stated;

We are rightly told that psychological factors are paramount in combat. But this is not all; properly speaking, there are no other factors, for all others - weaponry, manoeuvrability - influence only indirectly by provoking moral reactions,...., the human heart is the starting point in all questions of war.¹⁴

¹⁰P.R.O., WO76/24, "Record of Officers' Service, 1/Leinster Regiment".

¹¹P.R.O., WO76/25, "Record of Officers' Service, 2/Royal Irish Regiment".

¹²P.R.O., WO76/2, "Record of Officers' Service, 4th. Royal Irish Dragoon Guards".

¹³D. Porch, "The French Army and the Spirit of the Offensive, 1900-14", in B. Bond and I. Roy (eds.), *War and Society: A Yearbook of Military History*, Croom Helm, London, 1975, p.120.

¹⁴*ibid*, p.120.

While; “the English-speaking nations never completely fell into the mainstream of continental military thought,”¹⁵ a number of senior officers in Britain did adopt the ‘cult of the offensive’ as providing a solution to the problems of overcoming firepower in modern war. As T. Travers notes, in the British army;

This unofficial cult of the offensive was argued via several sequential theses in the 1902-14 period, namely (1) that new weapons (firepower) had definitely arrived and now influenced the battlefield to a high degree; nevertheless (2) the fire-power lessons of the South African war (1899-1902) were abnormal and not typical and so could not be seen as undermining the future of offensive strategy; furthermore (3) despite high losses the Japanese had defeated the Russians in Manchuria (1904-5) through offensive spirit, cold steel and high morale rather than fire-power; hence (4) the nation, the army and the individual must be taught to suffer losses because the essential but reliable offensive strategy of the next war would be very costly; moreover (5) offensive tactics must actually aim at heavy losses because this was the reliable and sure way of getting through enemy defences and fire-power, and therefore (6) because of these factors and the very stress of modern war, the individual soldier must either be more highly disciplined, or develop a much loftier sense of individual enthusiasm and initiative, or feel himself an organic fighting unit of a virile nation. It was agreed that the end result was to be the higher morale of the individual and the army; and (7) that, in summary the offensive must be maintained at all costs, the more so because of the

¹⁵J. Luvaas, “European Military Thought and Doctrine, 1870-1914”, in M. Howard (ed.), The Theory and Practice of War; Essays Presented to Captain B. H. Liddle Hart, Cassell, London, 1965, p.72.

doubts concerning the patriotism of the town-bred recruits and the very difficulty of the offensive.¹⁶

It will be seen that morale and discipline were central considerations to the 'cult of the offensive'. Sections, 3, 4, 6 and 7 above all relate to this theme. Section 6, does, however, demonstrate one of the serious contradictions over the offensive; namely whether the soldier should be more tightly disciplined or more reliance placed on his individual morale. This saw a tactical debate in the British command. Some officers, notably Kiggell, believed in mass formations, tightly disciplined, relying on the bayonet in the attack.¹⁷ Meanwhile, others, such as McMahon, stressed that the individual soldier should be more highly trained in the use of the rifle, and therefore should act more on his own initiative.¹⁸

The debate was also influenced by the basic mistrust placed on working class recruits in this period, mentioned by Travers, above. This was a Europe wide problem. The Polish financier Jean de Bloch; "was pessimistic, too, about the modern soldier, recruited from the cities, much less able than his ancestors to withstand the wear and tear of modern war. This meant, paradoxically, that the spirit of armies has much greater importance than before."¹⁹ Underlying this, of course, was the idea of social Darwinism, and this was especially pronounced in the British army. The British, unlike most other European armies, relied on the voluntary system and this was important to contemporary social Darwinists. Some believed that volunteers were more highly motivated and

¹⁶T. Travers, The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front & the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900-18, Routledge, London, 1990, pp.43-4.

¹⁷ M. Samuels, Command or Control? Command, Training and Tactics in the British and German Armies, 1888-1918, Frank Cass, London, p.103.

¹⁸*ibid*, p.103.

¹⁹T. H. E. Travers, "Technology, Tactics and Morale: Jean de Bloch, the Boer War and British Military Theory, 1900-1914", Journal of Modern History, 51, 1979, p.266.

intelligent than conscripts.²⁰ However, others, aware that seventy per cent of British recruits were unemployed when they enlisted²¹ reflected that; “it followed that many ‘fighting men’ by trade are anything but fighting men by temperament. It was easier in 1913, even if you hated fighting, to enlist as a ‘sodger’ than to fight your own way in an overcrowded labour market.”²² Samuels notes that this enlistment of lower working class recruits meant that;

To achieve the discipline required for assault tactics, the army imposed a strict system of regulations upon the troops: ‘supervision was omnipresent and individuality was systematically stamped out of the recruit. The result was troops that were ‘bred to deference and lacking in initiative.’ Such troops could not be relied upon to carry out tasks on their own and depended on precise orders. This meant that the British Army required larger numbers of officers and N.C.O.s than did other armies in order to ensure the constant presence of authority. This constant presence, in turn, increased the troops’ dependence on external control.²³

Despite this belief in the offensive as a solution to a series of fundamental problems in modern war, it was never adapted in its entirety by the British army. Indeed, by 1912, a number of officers were seriously questioning this ‘cult’.²⁴ In infantry training there remained some belief in the offensive as a way to destroy enemy morale. General Alymer Haldane, observing the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers charge 150 yards across open ground in manoeuvres in August 1912, noted; “but in actuality the enemy

²⁰T. Travers, *The Killing Ground*, p.47.

²¹S. Bidwell and D. Graham, *Fire-Power*, p.42.

²²A. Osburn, *Unwilling Passenger*, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1932, p.70.

²³M. Samuels, *Command or Control?*, p.118.

²⁴T. Travers, *The Killing Ground*, p.44.

would have probably flown when bayonets were fixed.”²⁵ Nevertheless, the Boer War experience also meant that British soldiers’ marksmanship received considerable attention in the 1902-14 period and thus British soldiers were not taught solely to rely on the bayonet.²⁶

In the British Cavalry, the debate over the offensive took a very different form; this was in *l’arme blanche* controversy. Essentially this debate was a matter of emphasis, as to whether the British cavalry should rely on the sword or the rifle as its primary weapon. In some respects it was unusual that this debate took place as other European armies had formed their doctrines on this issue many years previously. For example, the French army stressed the use of the sword in their 1882 and 1886 regulations.²⁷ Also, British experience in the Boer War had practically shown the sword to be redundant. As with the discussion over the offensive, *l’arme blanche* debate had much to do with morale. Sir John French in his evidence given to the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, stated; “if the cavalryman is taught that he is to rely mainly upon his rifle, his morale is taken away from him, and if that is done his power is destroyed.”²⁸

In contrast Sir Ian Hamilton commented; “Compared to a modern rifle,..., the sword or lance can only be regarded as a medieval toy.”²⁹ At its most advanced those opposed to *l’arme blanche*, most notably Erskine Childers (in his *War and the Arme Blanche*, London, 1910) suggested that the cavalry should be armed with the rifle only.³⁰

By 1912 it seemed that the supporters of *l’arme blanche* had triumphed. The lance had been re-introduced for active service by Army Order 158 of 1909 and leading

²⁵Cited, *ibid*, p.71.

²⁶M. Samuels, *Command or Control?*, pp.118-9.

²⁷J. Luvaas, “European Cavalry”, p.87.

²⁸Cmd., 1789, paras. 17218-41, cited in B. Bond, “Doctrine and Training in the British Cavalry”, p.109.

²⁹B. Bond, “*Doctrine and Training in the British Cavalry*”, p.110.

³⁰*ibid*, p.116.

opponents of *l'arme blanche* such as Field Marshal Lord Roberts (retired) and Erskine Childers (a civilian, although a Boer War veteran who had served in the City Imperial Volunteers) were marginalised. However, the reliance on offensive tactics in the British Cavalry was criticised by General Sir Charles Douglas, observing the Cavalry Division at the annual manoeuvres of 1912;

Our cavalry commanders are inclined to employ shock action whenever possible without reference to the circumstances of particular cases,...., many of the manoeuvres showed a disregard of the effect of fire that could not be justified by our regulations, and the attempts to combine shock and fire action were seldom successful. There were grounds for fear that 'the present training of cavalry shows tendencies that may lead to the useless sacrifice of our available cavalry force in war, and that it would be wise to impress on our Cavalry Commanders that while the mounted attack is the most effective method of obtaining decisive results,...., attacks of this nature which promise nothing but a useless sacrifice cannot be too strongly condemned.³¹

Nevertheless, the extent to which *l'arme blanche* debate was merely a matter of emphasis is shown by Sir John French's view of the 1913 cavalry manoeuvres, in which, though a firm advocate of the use of the sword, he stressed that British cavalry had to be able to effectively perform the dismounted role³² and the actual performance of the British cavalry regiments in 1914. As R. Holmes notes of the latter;

³¹cited, *ibid*, pp.117-8.

³²R. Holmes, *The Little Field Marshal: Sir John French*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1981, p.162.

The battlefield performance of British cavalry was not always perfect, but it was head and shoulders above that of its German opponents or its French allies. Horses were kept fresh because British troopers walked as often as they rode, and the skilful combination of shock action and dismounted fire quickly established the moral superiority of British horsemen. When the Cavalry Corps was thrown into the line at Messines in October 1914 it fought on foot with a tenacity of which infantry regiments could have been proud.³³

The debate over the offensive and the *arme blanche* in the British army between 1902 and 1914 clearly centred on the issues of morale and discipline. In the age of the magazine rifle, machine gun and quick firing artillery piece it was realised that casualties would be horrific (Hubert Gough estimated that twenty-five per cent losses would occur in an assault and Major General Knox anticipated that 20,000 men would become casualties in the B.E.F.'s first engagement.³⁴) In these circumstances, it was believed that only firm discipline and high morale would enable successful assaults to be carried out.

Perhaps of even more importance to discipline and morale were the splits in the officer corps caused by these debates on the offensive. While regimental officers do seem to have been informed on these debates³⁵ the main protagonists seem to have been either

³³*ibid*, pp.164-5.

³⁴T. Travers, *The Killing Ground*, p.45.

³⁵*ibid*, p.55, Travers cites the military contents of the library of Captain Bowen-Colthurst, Royal Irish Rifles as; L. S. Amery, *The Problem of the Army*, London, 1903, Lord Roberts, *A Nation in Arms*, London, 1907, Col. C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars*, London, 1906, Spenser Wilkinson, *Britain at Bay*, London, 1909, The Military Correspondent of the Times, *The Foundations of Reform*, London, 1908, The Military Correspondent of the Times, *Essays and Criticism*, London, 1911 and Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. James, *Modern Strategy*, London, 1904. The books all showed evidence of having been read. However, Bowen-Colthurst's subsequent action in the Easter Rising and court martial (at which he was found guilty but insane) suggests that he should not be seen as entirely typical of pre-war British Army officers!

staff officers, generals or civilians. The old tradition of not ‘talking shop’ in the mess³⁶ seems to have prevented any serious splits between regimental officers over the tactics to be used. Indeed, as J. R. Harvey observed of officers of the 5th. Royal Irish Lancers, on first going into action in 1914, they had not come down firmly on either side of *l’arme blanche* debate, although they were clearly informed about it; “A discussion arose amongst the officers, as to whether they should draw their revolvers or their swords first; but all those who were in possession of whiskey-flasks drew them without asking anybody.”³⁷

Following the British experience in the Boer War of 1899-1902 it was painfully obvious to both soldiers and politicians that the British army was drastically in need of reform. The issues which reform specifically tackled were; the re-organisation of British reserve forces, recruiting problems for both the regular and reserve forces and the organisation of an expeditionary force for immediate use overseas in the event of war. In terms of the discipline and morale of the British army as a whole, and the Irish units in particular, these reforms had few repercussions. Indeed, the 1908 Haldane reforms caused remarkably few changes in regular units and their effect on discipline and morale. This was in sharp contrast to the Cardwell reforms of 1868-81 when, in the case of the 27th. Inniskilling Fusiliers, which received the 108th. Madras Infantry Regiment as its second battalion; “Officers, and indeed some long-serving soldiers, were outraged that their Regiment, which had served the Crown since King William III’s days, should be merged with one that had not even formed part of the British Army until 1861 and could display only one solitary Battle Honour.”³⁸

³⁶See E. A. Muenger, The British Military Dilemma in Ireland; Occupational Politics, 1886-1914, University Press of Kansas and Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1991, p.22.

³⁷J. R. Harvey, The History of the 5th. (Royal Irish) Regiment of Dragoons, from 1689 to 1799, Afterwards, The 5th. Royal Irish Lancers, from 1858 to 1921, Gale and Polden Ltd., Aldershot, 1923, p.239.

³⁸J. M. Brereton, The British Soldier, A Social History from 1661 to the Present Day,

Nevertheless, the reforms of the 1902-08 period do demand attention as, from the point of view of discipline and morale, they do provide a valuable insight into how Irish troops were viewed in this period. During the South African War, Irish units in the British Army had been rewarded for their loyalty by the establishment of the Irish Guards in 1901 and the right of the Irish regiments to wear shamrock on St. Patrick's Day, bestowed by Queen Victoria, following the Siege of Ladysmith.³⁹ While some 300 Irishmen did serve in the two Irish Transvaal Brigades, about 30,000 Irishmen served against the Boers; "the disproportion between Irish involvement for and against the Boers was so obvious that unionists purred with approval and saw hope for Ireland yet."⁴⁰

However, while Irish units were now more fully trusted on overseas service, some doubts remained about Irish militia and regular units serving in Ireland. In 1899 Lord Roberts, General Officer Commanding in Chief in Ireland, wrote to Lord Wolseley, the Commander in Chief,

I have seen a confidential letter,..., in which,..., it is proposed to embody six militia battalions, (Irish), and to station five of them in Ireland. On talking the matter over with the Lord Lieutenant and the Under-Secretary, His Excellency begged me to express to you his hope that the whole six Irish battalions would be taken out of this country and replaced with either English or Scottish battalions.

The Irish government think it would be better not to let the Irish battalions know where they are to be quartered until after they have been embodied and arrangements made for their move across the Channel.⁴¹

The Bodley Head, London, 1986, p.75.

³⁹D. Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland, 1900-22," in T. Bartlett and K. Jeffrey, *A Military History of Ireland*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p.380.

⁴⁰*ibid*, p.380.

⁴¹Letter, Roberts to Wolseley, 27th. October 1899, Roberts Papers, N.A.M., 7101-23-110-1, cited, Muenger, *British Military Dilemma*, p.123.

This attitude changed gradually. In 1903 three Irish militia battalions out of fourteen were allotted to Ireland; in 1905, four, and in 1908, the number was increased to ten Irish Special Reserve battalions out of 21.⁴²

The importance of the 1908 reforms in their relation to Ireland is not what they achieved, but rather what they did not attempt to establish. The National Reserve was not extended to Ireland, partly out of concerns over the loyalty of Irish reservists, but also due to bureaucratic wrangling between the Irish Administration and the War Office.⁴³ Likewise, and more importantly, the Territorial Force was not established in Ireland⁴⁴ and this was for a number of reasons. Firstly, and most obviously, the Rifle Volunteer Movement, established in 1859 in the rest of the United Kingdom, had never been extended to Ireland. This was in spite of attempts by Irish M.P.s to have legislation relating to this force made applicable to Ireland in 1859, 1860, 1863, 1877, 1878, 1879, 1881, 1884, 1886 and 1897.⁴⁵

This was also despite a strong military interest by Irish Unionists. Two of the Secretaries of State for War in the 1902-14 period, St. John Brodrick (later 9th. Viscount and 1st. Earl of Midleton and a leader of the Southern Unionists in the 1917-18 Irish Convention) and H. O. Arnold-Foster (Liberal-Unionist M.P. for West Belfast, 1892-1906) had strong Irish links.⁴⁶ Equally, Edward Saunderson, M.P., the leader of the

⁴²P.R.O., WO32/7081, cited *ibid*, p.124.

⁴³On this issue see, E. A. Muenger, "A National Reserve for Ireland: the Story of an Aborted Force, 1910-14", *The Irish Sword*, XIII, 51, 1977.

⁴⁴I. F. W. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558-1945*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991, p.294 and H. Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force; A Social and Political History 1859-1908*, Archon Books, Hamden Connecticut, 1975, p.156.

⁴⁵I. F. W. Beckett, *Riflemen Form; A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement 1859-1908*, Ogilby Trusts, Aldershot, 1982, pp.273-4.

⁴⁶Details on Brodrick and Arnold-Foster are taken from; A. Jackson, *Irish Unionists in the House of Commons, 1884-1911*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, P. Buckland, *Irish Unionism 1, The Anglo-Irish and the New Ireland, 1885 to 1922*, Gill and Macmillian, Dublin, 1972, I. Beckett, "H. O. Arnold-Foster and the Volunteers," in I. F. W. Beckett and J. Gooch (eds.), *Politicians and Defence*, Manchester University Press, Manchester,

Ulster Unionists from 1884 to 1906 was known as the "Orange Colonel", his rank coming from his command of the Cavan Militia, 4th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers.⁴⁷ James Craig was also a militia officer, in the Antrim Militia, 3rd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles and served in the 6th. company, Imperial Yeomanry, during the South African War. He continued the Ulster Unionist tradition of amateur military service, becoming M.P. for East Down in 1906, the year in which Saunderson died.⁴⁸

Secondly, the Territorial Force was not introduced in Ireland out of a sense of mistrust of Irishmen as a whole. This was a concern shared by British government ministers, some army officers and some Irish Unionists, that a wholesale introduction of the Territorial Force system to Ireland would simply have given arms to potential revolutionaries. Indeed, some British Territorial units with Irish immigrants in their ranks were a subject of mistrust in this period. For example, there was concern over sending the West Lancashire Territorial Division to Ireland in the event of war, due to the; "political sympathies which may obtain in certain units."⁴⁹ This concern was understandable and, indeed, was to be justified by the events of 1912-14. One of only two Irish reserve units fundamentally changed by the 1908 reforms in Ireland, the North Irish Horse,⁵⁰ was believed to be riddled with U.V.F. sympathisers during the Third Home Rule crisis. In

1981 and M. Arnold Foster, The Right Honourable Hugh Oakley Arnold-Foster; A Memoir by his Wife, Edward Arnold, London, 1910, pp.222-300.

⁴⁷A. Jackson, Colonel Edward Saunderson; Land and Loyalty in Victorian Ireland, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995.

⁴⁸On Craig's military career see, P. Buckland, James Craig, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1980, p.7 and P.R.O., WO339/3792, Service record of Lieutenant Colonel James Craig.

⁴⁹P.R.O., WO32/7110, "Mobilization of the Territorial Division allotted to Ireland", letter from G. W. D. Ward, Army Council, to General Officer Commanding in Chief, Ireland, 22/3/12.

⁵⁰The North of Ireland Imperial Yeomanry had been formed in 1903, both it and the South of Ireland Imperial Yeomanry being formed from the Irish Imperial Yeomanry unit which served in the South African War. In 1908, both the North and South Irish Horse undertook the imperial obligation of the Special Reserve. They were the only two yeomanry units in the United Kingdom to accept these terms of service.

1914, Count Gleichen suggested that this regiment was composed of, “‘Black Protestants’ who would desert to the U.V.F. at the first sign of trouble.”⁵¹ It is also clear that in the Fermanagh Squadron of U.V.F. cavalry, all but six members were members of the North Irish Horse.⁵²

Members of the North Irish Horse were also heavily involved in the U.V.F. elsewhere. Lieutenant E. C. Herdman, a serving officer of the regiment was drilling U.V.F. men at Baronscourt Demesne.⁵³ Indeed, it was noted that Herdman; “has taken a prominent part in the formation of the U.V.F. force in Tyrone.”⁵⁴ Meanwhile, in Omagh, Sergeant(?) Jack Neely, a Drill Instructor with the regiment was training 29 mounted men⁵⁵ and Lieutenant B. Magill was drilling members of the Unionist Club at Newcastle, Co. Down, as early as March 1912.⁵⁶

While the North Irish Horse was the most pro-Unionist Special Reserve unit, officers and men from other Northern Special Reserve units did play an active part in the U.V.F.. A police report of August 1913 showed two serving officers of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers Special Reserve battalions and three other ranks of the Royal Irish Rifles Special Reserve battalions as being involved in drilling U.V.F. units.⁵⁷ In addition to this, other Special Reserve officers had shown great sympathy to the Unionist cause.

⁵¹Mottistone Ms.22,191-194, Nuffield College, Oxford, cited, pp.6 and 391, I. F. W. Beckett, The Army and the Curragh Incident 1914, published by The Bodley Head for the Army Records Society, London, 1986.

⁵²Mottistone papers, 22,176, cited, J. Howie, “Militarising a Society: The Ulster Volunteer Force, 1913-14,” in Y. Alexander and A. O’Day (ed.), Ireland’s Terrorist Dilemma, Dordrecht, Lancaster, 1986, p.216.

⁵³Letter from W. A. O’Connell, Deputy Inspector General, Royal Irish Constabulary, to Under Secretary for Ireland, 24/9/13, P.R.O., WO141/26.

⁵⁴Same to same, 14/10/13, WO141/26.

⁵⁵Report by Constable T. Emerson, R.I.C., 15/10/12, P.R.O., WO141/26.

⁵⁶Memo. 15/5/12, P.R.O., WO141/26.

⁵⁷“Return of Soldiers, ex-soldiers, or other persons connected with the Army who are shown in Drilling Returns for August 1913 as having acted as Instructors to Unionist Clubs & c., and as to which there is evidence available,” P.R.O., WO141/26.

For example, Lieutenant Colonel McCammon, the commanding officer of the 5th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles (South Down Militia) inspected 608 U.V.F. men at Lisburn in May 1913⁵⁸ and Colonel Sir Hugh H. Stewart of the 3rd. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers (Armagh Militia) stated, in writing, to an Orange Lodge meeting in County Tyrone that he would resign his commission as soon as Home Rule became law.⁵⁹ By October 1913 Lieutenant Colonel McCammon was commanding a U.V.F. battalion.⁶⁰

There were also some fears about the loyalty of other ranks in the Irish Special Reserve battalions. The County Inspector in County Down reported to the Inspector General R.I.C. that he believed that the majority of men in the 4th. and 5th. Battalions of the Royal Irish Rifles (North and South Down Militia); "have signed the Covenant, and are also probably further organised in the Unionist interest and are looked upon by Colonel Wallace and other leaders as useful material to stiffen the Ulster Volunteer Force."⁶¹ Likewise, a report by a special military intelligence bureau established in the Irish Command in early 1914 stated;

There is no doubt that the Special Reserve battalions in Ireland afford an opportunity for men of both political parties to obtain military training without attracting attention.

It is not recommended that the Special Reserve trainings in 1914 should be suspended, but watch must be kept on the numbers and class of men recruited, and precautions taken in conjunction with the civil police that the arms and

⁵⁸Report by Vere Gregory, District Inspector, R.I.C., 8/5/13, P.R.O., WO141/26.

⁵⁹Report by Sergeant J. English, R.I.C. on Tyrooney Orange Lodge meeting held on 23/12/12, 27/12/12, P.R.O., WO141/26.

⁶⁰Report for the use of the Cabinet, October 1913, compiled by Acting Sergeant Edwards, Detective Branch, Belfast R.I.C., relating to the U.V.F. parade at Balmoral on 27/9/13, P.R.O., WO141/26.

⁶¹Extract from Inspector General's summary of Police Reports to 24/7/13, P.R.O., WO141/26.

ammunition temporarily in the hands of Special Reservists are not to be permitted to go astray.⁶²

The fate of the unit raised by the Belfast Corporation following the 1908 reforms, also suggests that fears of arming and training Territorial units in Ireland were justified. The Young Citizen Volunteers of Belfast were formed at a meeting at Belfast City Hall on the 10th. September 1912. This unit was clearly modelled on the more exclusive battalions of the London Regiment (Territorial Force) as each member had to pay a joining fee of 2s. 6d. and then the sum of 6d. per month.⁶³ The Young Citizen Volunteers were designed as a non-sectarian force and also embodied many of the ideas then in circulation in England of National Service. The stated aims of this force were;

To develop the spirit of responsible citizenship and municipal patriotism by means of lectures and discussions on civic matters... to cultivate, by means of modified military and police drill, a manly physique, with habits of self-control, self-respect and chivalry... to assist as an organisation, when called upon, the civil power in the maintenance of the peace.⁶⁴

Although started with laudable aims, the history of the Young Citizen Volunteers was an unhappy one. Very quickly the unit, organised as an infantry battalion, began to

⁶² "Memo. on the situation in Ireland on the 31st. March 1914 prepared in the Intelligence Section of the General Staff at Head Quarters, Irish Command", P.R.O., WO141/4, pp.13-14.

⁶³ "Report of the Council of the Young Citizen Volunteers of Ireland, 1912-13", N.A.M., 8210-88.

⁶⁴ Report on the inaugural meeting of the Young Citizen Volunteers of Belfast, at Belfast City Hall, 10/9/12, N.A.M., 8210-88 and P. Orr, The Road to the Somme; Men of the Ulster Division Tell Their Story, The Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1987, p.31.

face financial problems.⁶⁵ The formation of the U.V.F. in January 1913 also deprived the corps of recruits and it would seem that Belfast Corporation began to put its employees under pressure to join the Young Citizen Volunteers to compensate for this.⁶⁶ Soon after its formation the battalion had been offered to the government, probably as a Territorial Force unit. However, the government refused to recognise the Young Citizen Volunteers and in 1913, after much discussion and a number of resignations by Catholic members of the force, the unit became a regiment in the U.V.F..⁶⁷

Another point which should be made regarding the Territorial Force and Ireland, and which further suggests mistrust of Irish troops relates to the proposed employment of English Territorial units in Ireland in the event of war. There were real fears about a German raid on Ireland in the opening stages of a European war, with the intention of disrupting the mobilisation of the B.E.F..⁶⁸ It was thus decided that when the two regular infantry divisions and one regular cavalry brigade left Ireland to join the B.E.F. they should be replaced with Territorial troops, viz.; the East and West Lancashire Divisions and the Welsh Border Mounted Brigade.⁶⁹

⁶⁵See, P.R.O.N.I., D.1527, Accounts of the Young Citizen Volunteers of Belfast, 1912-15.

⁶⁶See, Roll of Honour of Belfast Corporation Employees serving in His Majesty's Forces, 1914-19, displayed in the council chamber, Belfast City Hall. The largest number serving in any one unit, served in the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles (Young Citizen Volunteers), which recruited much of its strength from the pre-war Young Citizen Volunteers.

⁶⁷P. Orr, *The Road to the Somme*, pp.32-3. Orr states that this unit joined the U.V.F. as early as 1913, however, an Army Intelligence Summary of 4/4/14 stated; "The Young Citizen Volunteers in Belfast 800 strong have now definitely thrown in their lot with the U.V.F., and the R.[oman] C.[atholic] members withdrawn." See, P.R.O., WO141/4.

⁶⁸Letter, General Officer Commanding in Chief, Ireland, to Secretary, War Office, 3/5/12, P.R.O., WO32/7110.

⁶⁹Memorandum by Director of Military Training, 29/4/12 and letter, General Officer Commanding in Chief, Western Command, to Secretary, War Office, 29/1/13, WO32/7110.

This replacement would clearly be fraught with problems. The East Lancashire Territorial Association made it clear that it could not mobilise as quickly as the War Office planned, due to the necessity of purchasing stores from contractors to complete mobilisation.⁷⁰ Also the General Officer Commanding in Chief in Ireland pointed out that the limited railway network in Ireland would not allow regular troops to leave Ireland to join the B.E.F., while disembarking Territorial units to replace them.⁷¹

The General Officer Commanding in Chief, Ireland, suggested three solutions to this problem; 1) to increase the number of regular troops in Ireland and to maintain some, who were not committed to the B.E.F., in Ireland in time of war, 2) to despatch only one regular division from Ireland to the B.E.F. before the Territorial units arrived in Ireland, 3) to raise additional Special Reserve units in Ireland.⁷² The most logical of these would appear to have been to increase the Special Reserve establishment in Ireland. The fact that the War Office was prepared both to delay full mobilisation and risk the defence of Ireland, while English Territorial Force units cumbrously mobilised, again suggests a basic mistrust of Irish troops in the 1902-14 period.

Lastly, the Special Reserve system which was introduced in Ireland proved to be very beneficial in providing troops for overseas service. While the nine Irish infantry regiments consisted of twenty Special Reserve battalions in 1914, the eleven Scottish regiments provided just thirteen.⁷³ This organisation of reserve units in Ireland had definite advantages to the British government in that it had more units available for overseas service in the event of war; the Territorial Force then having no overseas

⁷⁰Letter from Secretary, East Lancashire Territorial Association to Brigadier-General in charge of Administration, Western Command, 13/12/12, WO32/7110.

⁷¹Letter, General Officer Commanding in Chief, Ireland to Secretary, War Office, 3/5/12, WO32/7110.

⁷²*ibid.*

⁷³Figures calculated from R. Money Barnes, *The British Army of 1914*, Seeley Service & Co. Ltd., London, 1968.

obligation. If a regiment had more than one Special Reserve battalion, the others would be termed Extra Special Reserve battalions and the understanding was that, in time of war, these units would go overseas as complete units. (In addition to the Irish Extra Special Reserve battalions, twelve English and three Scottish regiments had one such battalion.)⁷⁴

In addition to this, with the decision not to extend the Territorial Force to Ireland, the two Irish Yeomanry regiments, the North Irish Horse and South Irish Horse, were converted into Special Reserve units and in time of war were partially committed to overseas service. The North Irish Horse had always, from 1908, one squadron trained and equipped for immediate overseas service.⁷⁵ On the outbreak of war two squadrons of the North Irish Horse and one of the South Irish Horse went to France with the original B.E.F. and were the first non-regular British troops to see service during the war.⁷⁶

Why Ireland was given such special treatment over the issue of Special Reserve units is unclear, but it would seem to be based on a desire to move Irish reserve units out of Ireland, as quickly as possible, in the event of war⁷⁷. Certainly, there is little to suggest that they were better trained or more disciplined than their English or Scottish counterparts, and thus better prepared to take their place in the front-line. Captain Dorman, while noting that the North Irish Horse did not hold one court martial between 1908 and 1913 noted some serious problems in the training of the Regiment. The unit

⁷⁴J. K. Dunlop, The Development of the British Army 1899-1914; From the eve of the South African War to the eve of the Great War; with special reference to the Territorial Force, Methuen, London, 1938, p.274.

⁷⁵E. M. Dorman, "The North Irish Horse", Army Review, III, 1913, p.542. Captain Dorman was a regular officer in the 4th. Royal Irish Dragoon Guards and was serving as the adjutant of the North Irish Horse when he wrote this article.

⁷⁶J. K. Dunlop, The Development of the British Army, p.262.

⁷⁷It should, however, be noted, that in August 1914, of the 20 Irish Special and Extra Special Reserve battalions, only two, the 4th. and 5th. battalions of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, were detailed for duty outside Ireland, in Sittingbourne, England. See "Allocation of Extra and Special Reserve Battalions to Defended Ports, etc., December 1914", P.R.O., W.O.162/3.

covered a vast geographical area with the four squadrons based at Londonderry, Enniskillen, Dundalk and Belfast, and training was carried out at thirty-two drill stations dotted all over the North of Ireland. This meant that some men had to travel up to twenty miles to the nearest drill hall. Also the regiment was unable to train with government horses and the men provided their own mounts, which were generally too heavy for cavalry work. As late as 1913 the regiment was being trained as mounted infantry and did not even possess swords - a serious deficiency given the role which cavalry was expected to play in a future war. Equally, men of the regiment could not take part in regular army manoeuvres as these were carried out at the same time as the harvest, when members of the North Irish Horse would have to be at their farms.⁷⁸

To counterbalance these deficiencies the regiments' annual camp lasted for twenty-four days, as opposed to the fourteen of most Territorial Yeomanry regiments, absenteeism was not a serious problem and the men received an extra four pounds per annum for undertaking the Special Reserve commitment.⁷⁹ Of the officers, the four squadron commanders, two captains and the senior subaltern were ex-regular officers, which shows a good degree of professionalism amongst the officer corps. Lastly, N.C.O.s of the regiment were able to attend courses at the Cavalry Depot in Dublin.⁸⁰

Details on other Special Reserve units are less comprehensive. C. C. Miller serving in a Special Reserve Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in 1915 commented on the persisting 'old militia' traditions in the battalion, noting that the Commanding Officer, Colonel MacClintock, had never served as a regular officer.⁸¹ By contrast, a number of officers in the 3rd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment refused to

⁷⁸p.R.O., WO68/564, p.490.

⁷⁹*ibid.*

⁸⁰*ibid.* Except where noted, all details on the North Irish Horse have been taken from E. M. Dorman, "The North Irish Horse".

⁸¹Captain C. C. Miller, manuscript entitled, "A Letter from India to my daughters in England", Imperial War Museum, 83/3/1, p.17.

transfer from the militia to the Special Reserve. For example, Captain J. O. Johnston, an officer with twenty one years service preferred to transfer to the Reserve of Officers, informing his C.O.;

I am sorry that we are disbanded without a chance of saying goodbye to one another, as long as we were the Wexford Militia I should have stayed on as long as they would let me, but to tell the truth I am not + never was very proud of the Regiment [i.e. the Royal Irish Regiment] we were attached to though I would never say a word to any one against it, but I would rather not go into their Reserve Battalion if I could help it.⁸²

In the 4th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, it is clear that officers became more professional after 1908. For example, Lieutenant William Herbert Stuart Berry, who had served (presumably as an other rank) in Malta, Bermuda, Gibraltar, South Africa and Egypt, was commissioned into the battalion, after receiving his A and B certificates from the University of Reading's Officer Training Corps. The 4th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers had continuing strong links with Reading University, Second-Lieutenant A. E. Allnatt joined the battalion from this O.T.C in November 1911, as did four other officers between April and August 1912.⁸³ During this period A. R. Morsy also joined this unit as a second-lieutenant, having served in the University of London's O.T.C..⁸⁴

Thus the Haldane reforms did make an important change, at least to this battalion. Whereas, previously, any respectable and well-connected young man could have expected

⁸²Letter, Captain J. O. Johnston to Lord Stopford, 29/1/08, N.A.M., 6012/258/2.

⁸³Details taken from "Record of Militia Officers Service in 3rd. and 4th. Battalions, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 1847-1917", vol. II, pp.37-42, P.R.O., WO68/382.

⁸⁴*ibid.*, p.49.

to receive a commission in an Irish militia unit, now a recognised military training was required. Another point which should be made is that, despite the local basis of these battalions, C.O.s were clearly keen to officer their battalions, at least partly, with non-Irish officers. In November 1914 the next of kin details of the officers of the 4th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, suggests that four were normally resident in the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers' Regimental Area, three in the rest of Ireland, eight in England and one in Jamaica.⁸⁵ This again suggests a distrust of Irish troops, in this case Irish reserve officers, which was largely justified by the numbers of Special Reserve officers who were involved in the Ulster Volunteer Force on 1912-14.

Discipline in the Special Reserve units appears to have been very good as between August 1913 and July 1914 just three Special Reservists were court martialled.⁸⁶ However, this does require some qualification, as Dorman noted of the North Irish Horse;

There are very few cases indeed of offences which have to be brought before the commanding officer, in fact the average is about two per training. It is absolutely essential that the commanding officer should have a free hand in administering punishment. There is one offence - viz., drunkenness - for which the only suitable punishment is instant dismissal from the corps, a punishment which is

⁸⁵*ibid*, pp.66-78. This, of course, may not be representative of the pre-August 1914 situation, as many men sought commissions in the Special Reserve on the outbreak of war.

⁸⁶See appendix 5 based on P.R.O., WO86/60 and WO86/62, District Courts Martial register for units on home service, October 1912 to October 1914. The men court-martialled were Sergeant P. Boland, 4th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, who was tried in Kinsale on the 19/8/13 under S.40 of the Army Act and found not guilty; Private J. O'Sullivan, 5th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, tried in Limerick on 30/9/13 for violence to a Colour Sergeant and sentenced to 56 days detention, and Corporal O. Dowling, 3rd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, tried in Dublin on 30/3/14 for absence without leave and reduced to the ranks. It is likely that Corporal Dowling and Sergeant Boland were regular instructors with these Special Reserve battalions.

felt much more by the man than any award of detention, for he has to undergo not only the ridicule of his comrades but also that of his friends when he gets home. Certain minor offences have to be dealt with rather leniently from a Regular soldier's point of view.⁸⁷

Thus Special Reserve battalions did not have to tolerate the persistent offenders that regular units had to accommodate, as Special Reserve units could easily dismiss such men. However, having observed this, it should be noted that the North Irish Horse was atypical of Irish Special Reserve units. In Special Reserve infantry units men were initially trained for six months, on a full time basis, before entering the reserve system which demanded that they attended a two week annual camp for six years.⁸⁸ This makes the court martial record of the Irish Special Reserve battalions in 1913-14 an impressive one, given that around 1,800 men were possibly training permanently for six months during this period.⁸⁹ Equally, it is clear that absenteeism in the Special Reserve was often overlooked. In July 1911, 19 Privates, out of 377 in the 3rd. Battalion, Connaught Rangers were absent without leave, in the 1912 annual camp one sergeant and 18 Privates were absent without leave and, in 1913, one sergeant and 22 Privates were similarly absent, out of an establishment of 424 men, which included officers and non-commissioned officers. It would seem that no legal proceedings were taken against these men⁹⁰ possibly as they had emigrated. Another reason why the courts martial

⁸⁷E. M. Dorman, "The North Irish Horse", p.542.

⁸⁸E. M. Spiers, *Haldane an Army Reformer*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1980, p.148.

⁸⁹This calculation is based on the figures of the 3rd. Battalion, Connaught Rangers. In the Summer of 1909 they had 89 recruits under instruction for the six month period. If we assume that the other nineteen Irish Special Reserve infantry battalions had a similar number, and in fact other units recruiting in more densely populated areas of Ireland were likely to have more, then this gives us a total of 1,780. See, P.R.O., WO79/40, "Historical Records of the 3rd. Special Reserve Battalion, The Connaught Rangers".

⁹⁰*ibid.*

statistics fail to record indiscipline in the Special Reserve battalions, is that military offenders could be dealt with in civil courts. For example, in July 1909 Gunner W. N. Foy, a deserter from the Mid-Ulster Royal Field Reserve Artillery (Special Reserve), was tried at Omagh Assizes.⁹¹

This organisation of Extra Special Reserve battalions in Ireland, was, as in the case of many features of the 1908 army reforms, not actually utilised when war broke out. Indeed, instead of serving overseas as complete units, as planned, these battalions simply served, like the third battalions, as draft finding units. As early as the 6th. August 1914, 224 men from the 4th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, were sent to the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles at Tidworth.⁹² However, the disparity in the numbers of men sent as reinforcements to Regular and New Army units overseas by Special Reserve battalions of the Royal Irish Rifles does suggest that the role of the 4th. and 5th. battalions was primarily seen as coastal defence, although whether this was due to necessity or, out of a greater belief in the loyalty of Irish units, is unclear. Between 1914 and 1918, the 3rd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles sent 8,069 men to the front, but the 4th. Battalion only 2,188 and the 5th. Battalion, 1,934.⁹³ This transformation of Extra Special Reserve battalions into draft finding units was not a popular one and it seems that a number of officers of these battalions wrote to John Redmond, M.P., regarding their promised overseas service and suggesting that the battalions be formed into an Irish Division. Redmond approached

⁹¹P.R.O., WO68/68, "Digest of services of the Tyrone Militia Artillery (from 1908 Mid-Ulster Royal Field Reserve Artillery) disbanded 20/10/09".

⁹²Anon., "4th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, Service of Regiment 1793-1918", handwritten manuscript, Royal Ulster Rifles Museum, Belfast and C. Falls, The History of the First Seven Battalions, The Royal Irish Rifles, (Now The Royal Ulster Rifles) in the Great War, Gale and Polden Ltd., Aldershot, 1925, vol.II, p.1.

⁹³C. Falls, The History of the First Seven Battalions, Royal Irish Rifles, p.186, appendix IV.

the War Office with this proposal, but it was rejected, although it had been planned to raise the Fourth New Army from Special Reserve battalions.⁹⁴

During the 1902-14 period there was an important change in the roles of the British army. Most importantly troops were withdrawn from many colonial stations. Indeed, it had been accepted that some overseas commitments were simply a waste of manpower. For example, in July 1905 the Committee of Imperial Defence had accepted that the United States government could not be prevented from invading Canada, if it wished to do so.⁹⁵ At the same time garrisons in Malta and Gibraltar were reduced.⁹⁶ This realignment of military forces was carried out to create a “striking force” of six divisions which would be available for overseas service in Europe or the colonies in the event of war.⁹⁷

These reforms brought few immediate implications for the discipline and morale of British soldiers. The traditional role of the British army in providing support to the civil power, did. During this 1902-14 period soldiers were regularly to be called out to help police the increasing number of well organised industrial disputes and, in Ireland, also against sectarian riots in Belfast in 1912 and Nationalist gun-running in July 1914 and, much more controversially, in what appeared to be an attempt to suppress the U.V.F., in March 1914, leading to the infamous Curragh Incident. Involvement in these episodes had serious implications for troop morale and military discipline.

Policing strikes was always an unpopular duty for the military. The work was thankless in the extreme and had the potential to introduce class consciousness into a

⁹⁴F. E. Whitton, The History of the Prince of Wales Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians), vol. II, The Great War and the Disbandment of the Regiment, Gale and Polden Ltd., London, no date, p.93 and Letter, War Office to General Officers Commanding in Commands, 25/10/14, P.R.O., WO162/3.

⁹⁵J. Gooch, The Plans of War; The General Staff and the British Military Strategy, c.1900-1916, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1974, p.167.

⁹⁶*ibid*, p.167.

⁹⁷E. M. Spiers, The Army and Society, 1815-1914, Longman, London, 1980, p.269.

military unit where the danger always seemed to be present of officers supporting the employers and other ranks, those workers on strike. J. W. Riddle, stationed in Belfast with the 1st. Battalion, Rifle Brigade, following the 1907 strike in the city (which ultimately saw, dockers, workers in Gallaher's Tobacco Factory, iron moulders, engineers and carters involved in strikes)⁹⁸ noted that one of his fellow soldiers was unwilling to give evidence relating to the riots.⁹⁹ Other soldiers, engaged in policing strikes elsewhere in the United Kingdom, were equally unhappy with their position.¹⁰⁰

Some soldiers also disliked aiding the civil power as often they had to restore the situation after inefficient police forces had lost control of the situation. In July 1912 troops were sent into the shipyards in Belfast in an attempt to let expelled Catholic workers return to their jobs. Brigadier-General Count Gleichen, Officer Commanding troops in Belfast, was very critical of the 100 strong Harbour Police, responsible for maintaining order in the shipyards and employed by the Belfast Harbour Commission. He stated that this force was; "of very little use, for it is to their interest to be 'in' with the workmen, and in matters of repressive duty their heart is not by any means in it: for if they carried out these duties to [the] utmost, they would very possibly, as I am told has happened before now, find themselves individually set upon and thrashed."¹⁰¹ He further noted that the Royal Irish Constabulary; "do not, in fact, dare to go on the [Queen's] Island without the protection of troops - so that for all practical purposes they are

⁹⁸E. O'Connor, *A Labour History of Ireland, 1824-1960*, Gill and Macmillan, 1992, pp.70-72.

⁹⁹J. W. Riddell, "The Army Life of J. W. Riddle, Rifle Brigade, 1907-33", unpublished manuscript, Imperial War Museum, 77/73/1, p.6.

¹⁰⁰Letter to Ramsay MacDonald, PRO30/69/1158, cited, G. D. Sheffield, "Officer-man relations, morale and discipline in the British Army, 1902-22", unpublished Ph.D., University of London, 1994, p.20.

¹⁰¹Letter to Major-General in charge of Administration, Irish Command, from Brigadier-General Count Gleichen, 26/7/12, in file entitled, "Aid to Civil Powers, Belfast, July-September 1912", P.R.O., WO35/60.

useless.”¹⁰² Gleichen also had little respect for the head of the Harbour Police, noting; “Their Chief, Mr. Johnstone, is best described by the term ‘old woman’.”¹⁰³

Nevertheless, the policing of strikes in the 1902-14 period never witnessed a breakdown of discipline in any regular army unit. The problems apparent in policing strikes became clear in 1907 when between 500 and 800 men of the 1,000 strong Belfast Royal Irish Constabulary mutinied after a policeman was dismissed for refusing to escort a motor wagon driven by a non-unionised worker. The strike resulted in troops being rushed into the city. The strike collapsed with one constable being dismissed, several suspended and 208 transferred to other areas of Ireland.¹⁰⁴ There are a number of reasons as to why no regular army unit so mutinied. Firstly, the War Office utilised a sensible rotation scheme, which meant that, in normal circumstances, no unit would serve in the area which it was recruited from.¹⁰⁵ Thus, only soldiers from non-Welsh units were sent to police the Welsh coal strikes of 1910.¹⁰⁶

Secondly, central government, and many senior soldiers, were increasingly unhappy with local authorities calling in the army when local police forces were unable to deal with industrial disputes. In 1907, Brigadier General Vesey Dawson, in charge of Northern Command, Ireland, and thus responsible for policing the strike in Belfast stated; “in my opinion it is very undesirable that troops should be called out to do police duty in a

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ Letter from Gleichen to Major General in charge of Administration, Irish Command, 24/7/12, P.R.O., WO35/60.

¹⁰⁴ J. Gray, *City in Revolt, James Larkin and the Belfast Dock Strike of 1907*, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1985, pp.111-136.

¹⁰⁵ A rare exception to this was during the July and August disturbances in Belfast in 1912. Brigadier-General Count Gleichen noted that, at one stage, if called upon to assist the civil power, he had, at his disposal only 120 men of the Chesire Regiment and; “some 50 of the R[oyal] Irish Rifles (permanent staff) - the latter of whom should not be used if it could possibly be avoided.” See, letter, Gleichen to Major-General in charge of Administration, Irish Command, 18/7/12, WO35/60.

¹⁰⁶ J. Blake, “Civil Disorder in Britain, 1910-39: The Roles of Civil Government and Military Authority”, D. Phil. thesis, University of Sussex, 1979, p.85.

town like Belfast.”¹⁰⁷ The government did take note of such comments, and during the 1910-11 South Wales coal strikes, men of the London Metropolitan Police were sent in, along with soldiers, to control the disturbances.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, in 1913, men of the Royal Irish Constabulary were sent to aid the Dublin Metropolitan Police, during the Dublin Lockout, while troops were confined to protecting property.¹⁰⁹ Over this period, officers became increasingly unhappy with taking up a policing role. For example, in 1912, Brigadier-General Count Gleichen, whose men were acting in aid of the civil power noted;

Are we, the ‘Military’, obliged to step in and try to carry out the duties that should obviously be done by the Police?,..., This may be all very well for a day or two; but we cannot carry out these Police duties for an indefinite period. At present it looks as if the troubles might last for weeks; and in the middle of the training season this is a very serious matter.¹¹⁰

Meanwhile, in September 1911, General Sir Neville Lyttleton had to cancel the remainder of the manoeuvres in Irish Command due to the Railway Strike.¹¹¹

Thirdly, many strikers felt that the troops were more impartial than the local police. This was certainly the case in South Wales where the local forces were seen to be tools of the mine owners. Equally, in Belfast, the Royal Irish Constabulary, with its Catholic majority, was disliked by Protestant workers, for sectarian reasons.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷J. Gray, *City in Revolt*, p.66.

¹⁰⁸B. Weinberger, *Keeping the Peace? Policing Strikes in Britain, 1906-26*, Berg, Oxford, 1991, p.37.

¹⁰⁹J. V. O’Brien, *“Dear, Dirty Dublin”. A City in Distress, 1899-1916*, University of California Press, London, 1982, pp.225-230.

¹¹⁰Letter, Gleichen to Major General in charge of Administration, Irish Command, 26/7/12, P.R.O., WO35/60.

¹¹¹Letters, Lyttleton to his wife, 16th., 18th., 19th. and 20th. September 1911, Sir Neville Lyttleton papers, Liddle Hart Centre for Military Archives, King’s College, London,

¹¹²J. Gray, *City in Revolt*, p.148.

Lastly, just as some soldiers sympathised with strikers, so a number of strikers sympathised with soldiers deployed in the aid of the civil power. Partly this was related to class issues, strikers and soldiers generally being from working class backgrounds. Also, the impression created by troops was an important one. J. Hutchinson, interviewed in 1987 remembered; "It was 1907 a great strike was raging at the Belfast docks. I was a six-year old then and one morning on my way to school in Comber Street, soldiers were on duty outside the Catholic chapel,..., it was an event in our otherwise miserable lives."¹¹³ The fact that Hutchinson remembered this eighty years later, suggests that neatly turned out troops made a deep impression in the Belfast slums and soldiers perhaps had the appearance of working class men who had achieved an important position in society. The other reason for striker/soldier sympathy was the presence of numbers of Boer War veterans amongst the strikers, who understood the soldiers' position. Remembering the situation in 1907, one former striker commented of the troops; "We didn't insult them because we knowed they was doing their duty - most of us was soldiers ourselves."¹¹⁴

There was also concern as to how strikes would affect Territorial Force units, from both ends of the political spectrum. Indeed, as P. Dennis observes; "The Labour Party and the trade unions refused to be associated with the new citizens' army, fearing that it would eventually be turned against the working class to maintain an essentially conservative society by intervening in strikes and industrial action on behalf of the civil authority."¹¹⁵ In fact, despite the magnitude of industrial disputes in the 1902-14 period, no Territorial or Special Reserve units were called out to suppress or police them,

¹¹³P. Orr, *The Road to the Somme*, p.9.

¹¹⁴Interview with Joseph Cooper and William Hughes, P.R.O.N.I., D3358/1, cited, J. Gray, *City in Revolt*, p.148.

¹¹⁵P. Dennis, *The Territorial Army, 1906-40*, The Royal Historical Society and The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1987, p.16.

although a number of Territorial Force officers were sworn in as Special Constables in Liverpool during the 1911 strike there.¹¹⁶

More concrete concerns came from the government, over the discipline of Territorial Force units in areas where strikes were taking place, and the fear that arms would fall into unauthorised hands. Thus, during the South Wales coal disputes of 1910, Territorial units in the affected area were ordered to return their rifles and ammunition to the armouries.¹¹⁷ There were also some fears about recruits to the army being in sympathy with the strikers, or indeed, strikers trying to infiltrate the military. For example, during the September 1911 Railway Strike no recruits were sent to Ireland for a period of ten days, it would appear, over fears of their subversion.¹¹⁸

Irish units were, like other British army units, heavily involved in support of the civil power in the 1902-14 period. For example, the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers sent 100 other ranks, under the command of Captain G. A. Woods, to Newport during the South Wales miners' strike and these men remained there from 9th. November 1910 to 31st. March 1911.¹¹⁹ The battalion presumably performed well in this situation as, in August 1911, men of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers were involved in policing the Birmingham Railway strike.¹²⁰

While industrial disputes always threatened disciplinary problems in military units sent to police them, the most serious breakdowns in military discipline during the 1902-14 period occurred over the Irish Home Rule issue. This issue witnessed four disciplinary

¹¹⁶J. Blake, "Civil Disorder in Britain, 1910-39", p.106.

¹¹⁷*South Wales Daily News*, 18/11/10, cited Weinberger, *Keeping the Peace?*, p.53.

¹¹⁸Letter and Telegram, Chief Recruiting Staff Officer, London to Headquarters, Dublin, 2/8/14 and 28/7/14, "File on Disturbances in Dublin", P.R.O., WO35/60.

¹¹⁹S. Mc Cance, *History of the Royal Munster Fusiliers, vol. II, From 1861 to 1922 (Disbandment)*, Gale and Polden Ltd., Aldershot, 1927, p.109.

¹²⁰E. M. Spiers, "The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1914", in D. Chandler and I. F. W. Beckett (eds.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the British Army*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994, p.214.

breakdowns; firstly, the *cause célèbre* of the resignation of Captain Wilfrid Spender; secondly, the “Curragh Incident” of March 1914, still referred to by many historians, incorrectly, as a mutiny; thirdly, the large number of serving and retired officers and other ranks who sympathised with and drilled units of the U.V.F.; and, lastly, the shooting of civilians at Bachelor’s Walk, in Dublin, following the July 1914 Howth gun-running.

Captain Wilfrid Spender was not exceptional amongst British army officers of this period in holding Unionist views; what did, however, make him exceptional was that he held a number of important staff positions at a very early age and these posts gave him easy access to the High Command, where he made his views known. Spender was also rather unusual in that his views against Home Rule were not, as in the case of so many British supporters of the Unionist cause, based on either a vague notion that the constitution was being undermined or the belief that the Liberal government had over-stretched itself in curtailing the powers of the House of Lords.¹²¹ Instead, Spender opposed Home Rule for Ireland due to the military threat posed to Britain by this measure; “The lessons of history were evident to Spender when studying the strategic importance of Ireland. They convinced him of the folly inherent in the creation of a Dublin Parliament.”¹²²

Spender, while serving in a staff appointment in India in 1912 made it clear that he would not help to suppress Ulster. A somewhat unlikely scenario, given his geographical location! His Commanding Officer advised him to submit a request to retire and in August 1912 he sent this to the War Office. This was refused and Spender was initially ordered to return to regimental duty. However, on the intervention of the Commander in Chief, India, he was ordered to return to Britain to explain his views at the War Office.

¹²¹On British support for Irish Unionists, see, W. S. Rodner, “Leaguers, Covenanters, Moderates, British Support for Ulster, 1913-14”, *Eire-Ireland*, XVII, 3, 1982.

¹²²I. Maxwell, “The Life of Sir Wilfrid Spender, 1876-1960,” unpublished Ph.D., Queen’s University of Belfast, 1991, p.11.

Spender made a good impression and was told that he was to join Haig's staff at Aldershot. J.E.B. Seely, Secretary of State for War, interviewed Spender and it became clear that he; "was demanding the sort of assurances which, when granted in March 1914 to the officers at the Curragh, would lead to the humiliation of the Asquith government."¹²³

The government, given Spender's views, was left with three options. Firstly, to approve Spender's request to retire. This would not only seem to vindicate Spender's position, but leave him with a pension; action which, in itself, could encourage a host of officers with Unionist sympathies to request to retire. The second option was to court martial Spender. There does seem to have been some threat of this, as Seely, in his interview with Spender, made it clear that, by becoming involved in politics, Spender had committed a grave offence.¹²⁴ Equally, Sir Edward Carson, leader of the Ulster Unionists, feared that he could be tried for incitement to mutiny, over Spender's case.¹²⁵ The third option, which the government favoured, was to force Spender to resign his commission. This would suggest to other officers that Spender had been at fault and few officers would be tempted to follow his lead, as he would be denied any pension rights.

Sir Nevil Macready, soon to become Adjutant-General and, already, in 1913 a leading authority on military law, as Director of Personnel Services at the War Office, despite seeing Irish Unionist intervention in the Spender case, supported the first option. Thus in 1913, Spender was permitted to retire with a pension of £120 per annum.¹²⁶

¹²³*ibid*, p.25.

¹²⁴*ibid*, pp.26-7.

¹²⁵*ibid*, pp.31-2.

¹²⁶Spender was to become Assistant Quarter-Master General of the Ulster Volunteer Force in September 1913 and was to re-enter the army in August 1914. He again caused controversy over his views on the 36th. (Ulster) Division's performance on 1st. July 1916, when he was serving as G.S.O.2 in the Division.

The Curragh Incident of March 1914 shares some similarities with the Spender case, as again, officers made it clear that they were not prepared to act against Ulster Unionists and demanded guarantees from the government on this point. This 'incident' has been covered in substantial detail elsewhere.¹²⁷ However, with reference to discipline and morale some observations should be made about this event. Firstly, it would be very wrong to describe this incident as a mutiny, as no orders were actually disobeyed. The sixty officers of the 3rd. Cavalry Brigade, led by Brigadier-General Sir Hubert Gough, merely threatened to resign if they were ordered against Ulster. Secondly, this whole incident was precipitated by the General Officer Commanding in Chief, Ireland, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Paget, who, in an ill-advised and incoherent speech to officers of the brigade made it rather unclear what options there were for officers ordered against Ulster, suggesting that officers with Ulster links could 'disappear' during hostilities. Lastly, it was unclear what exactly officers were expected to do in Ulster. The most recent research suggests that men of the brigade were merely to be used to reinforce depots in Ulster, to prevent arms and equipment falling into U.V.F. hands.¹²⁸

The wider implications of the Curragh Incident were vast. Gough's assurance from the government that he and his men would not be used against Ulster saw not only the resignation of the Secretary of State for War, Chief of the Imperial General Staff and Adjutant-General, but the collapse of any coercive power which the British government had to deal with the Ulster Volunteer Force. The incident also showed strong Unionist sympathy in the army, even amongst units with no Irish links. For example nine officers in the 2nd. Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, nine or ten in the 2nd. Battalion, Manchester Regiment, ten in the 2nd. Battalion, King's Own Scottish Borderers, thirteen

¹²⁷See especially, I. F. W. Beckett, The Army and the Curragh Incident, 1914, published by The Bodley Head for the Army Records Society, London, 1986.

¹²⁸*ibid.*, pp.8-10. See also, Order to Paget from the War Office, 14/3/14, P.R.O., WO35/209.

in the 1st. Battalion, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, a majority in the 1st. Battalion, Norfolk Regiment, fifteen in XV Brigade, Royal Field Artillery and possibly six in the VIII Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, also threatened to resign.¹²⁹ Equally, the incident threatened further serious disorders and breaches in discipline as it was clear that if officers were not prepared to act against Ulster Unionists, then other ranks might refuse to act against strikers during industrial disputes.¹³⁰

Thirdly, in terms of army discipline relating to the Irish Home Rule Issue, the issue of officers and other ranks in the U.V.F. must be further considered, as clearly this was the most fragrant breach of discipline in this period. Shortly after the outbreak of war, Lieutenant-General Richardson, General Officer Commanding the U.V.F. asked for the return of officers serving with British units, who had previously played an active part in the U.V.F. and whose services he required both for the U.V.F., in its new coastal defence role and in the formation of the 36th. (Ulster) Division. The number of officers requested is as shown in table 1.1, overleaf.¹³¹

This list is far from comprehensive, and there are some startling admissions of regular officers who had been involved in the U.V.F.. For example, Captain the Honourable Arthur O'Neill, who had rejoined the 2nd. Lifeguards on the outbreak of war, had been M.P. for Mid Antrim and Officer Commanding Antrim U.V.F.. He was killed in the early stages of the war and so was not included in this list.¹³² Equally, officers who had been involved in the U.V.F. on a temporary basis were not included in Richardson's return. Thus, Second-Lieutenant Sir Basil Brooke (later Lord Brookeborough) who

¹²⁹I. F. W. Beckett, The Army and the Curragh Incident, p.14.

¹³⁰*ibid.*, p.16.

¹³¹This table is compiled from a "Roll of Officers recently serving with the U.V.F. recalled to army service", Richardson Papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.1498/7.

¹³²T. O'Neill, The Autobiography of Terence O'Neill, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, 1963-1969, Granada Publishing Limited, London, 1972, pp.1-5.

drilled the U.V.F. in Colebrooke, County Fermanagh in 1912, while on leave from the 10th. Hussars, was omitted from Richardson's return.¹³³

Table 1.1. British army officers involved in the U.V.F. 1914.

Regiment	Number of officers requested
Household Cavalry	2
9th.[8th.?] Hussars	1
North Irish Horse	8
Guards Reserve	2
7/Royal Fusiliers	3
3/Somerset Light Infantry	1
?/North Staffordshire Regiment	1
Border Regiment	1
3/Royal Irish Regiment	1
4/Royal Irish Regiment	1
4/Royal Irish Rifles	2
4/Royal Irish Fusiliers	1
5/Royal Irish Fusiliers	1
Depot, Royal Dublin Fusiliers	1
5/Royal Irish Rifles	4
S. E. Coastal Defences	1
Embarkation Staff	1
Staff, B.E.F.	2
Officer Training Corps	1
R.A.M.C. (T.F.)	1
Antrim R.G.A.	1
Reserve, R.F.A.	1
R.S.O. (?)	2
Remounts	2
Depot, 38th. Division	1
Regiment not known	15

¹³³B. Barton, Brookeborough: The Making of a Prime Minister, Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University of Belfast, Belfast, 1988, p.21.

British officers' involvement was even more widespread than this would suggest. Major Viscount Crichton, Royal Horse Guards, was drilling with the 205 strong 'Enniskillen Horse' in October 1913.¹³⁴ Other regular officers showed sympathy to the U.V.F., without playing an active role in the movement. Lieutenant Charles A. M. Alexander, attending an Orange Order meeting in Tyrone, while on leave from the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers; "explained to the meeting that he could take no part in the proceedings while serving in the Army, but added that as soon as the Home Rule Bill becomes law he will sever his connection with it."¹³⁵

V. P. Le Frau, Augustine Birrell's Private Secretary made it clear that action could easily be taken against reserve or serving officers with U.V.F. links, noting that if two Justices of the Peace authorised drilling by U.V.F. units;

The question then arises of the purpose of this training. It cannot with any show of veracity be contended that it has a purely educational objective, as in the case of the boy scouts. The object may be seditious resistance to constituted authority as has often been openly stated; but it does not need either statute or regulation to condemn any action taken with such an object as contrary to the first duty of a soldier,..., An officer who takes part in meetings for such a purpose (political demonstrations) at all events in Belfast or any of the towns where soldiers are quartered, would appear to come within Clause 451 of the King's Regulations, by which an officer or soldier is forbidden to institute or take part in any meetings, demonstrations or processions for party or political purposes in barracks, quarters, camps or their vicinity.

¹³⁴Letter, P. A. Morrison, Deputy Inspector to Inspector General, Royal Irish Constabulary, 17/10/14, P.R.O., WO141/26.

¹³⁵Report by Sergeant J. English, Royal Irish Constabulary, 27/12/12, P.R.O., WO141/26.

Belfast Weekly News informing him that they had raised £18 6s. 8d. for the Ulster Defence Fund and continued;

time-expired men going home this trooping season are looking forward to taking their place in the [U.V.F.] ranks with their fellow countrymen. 'The Flag must be kept flying', & the motto of 'No Surrender' upheld. Those who will still be serving their King in India, & cannot go home for some years, sincerely hope that Ulster will win, & nothing will shake their loyalty to the Union.¹⁴⁰

On the 22nd. March 1914, Major R. F. Uniacke, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, reported to Headquarters, Irish Command; "Although I have no proof for saying so, I estimate that about ten per cent of [Inniskilling] Fusiliers, chiefly N.C.O.s are disaffected."¹⁴¹

Despite these clear pro-Unionist sympathies in some units recruited from the North of Ireland, the High Command's views of Irish troops did not seem to change markedly in this period. Partly this was due to the perceived unreliability of many non-Irish units over the Home Rule issue, shown by the Curragh Incident; all British army units, not just Irish ones were under some suspicion. Equally, Irish units in the British army had always been under a certain degree of suspicion. Muenger believes that the Indian mutiny had left a deep impression on British officers and they were thus always

¹⁴⁰Letter from men of 1st. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, to Editor, *Belfast Weekly News*, published in same, ?/1/14, cited, I. F. W. Beckett, *The Army and the Curragh Incident*, p.51.

¹⁴¹P.R.O., WO35/209, cited I. F. W. Beckett, *The Army and the Curragh Incident*, p.418 and Intelligence summary for 22/3/14, P.R.O., WO141/4.

wary of non-English troops.¹⁴² While there may be an element of truth in this, the Fenian experience of the 1860s was probably more pertinent in British officers minds.¹⁴³

This basic mistrust of Irish regular units meant that few of them were ever stationed in Ireland, as table 1.3, below, showing dispositions for July 1914¹⁴⁴, illustrates.

Table 1.3. The Dispositions of Irish Regular units, July 1914.

Regiment	1st. Battalion	2nd. Battalion
4th. R.I.D.G.	Tidworth	none
6th. Inns. Dragoons	Mutra	none
8th. K.R.I.H.	Amballa	none
5th. R. I. Lancers	Dublin	none
Irish Guards	Wellington Barracks	none
Royal Irish Regiment	Nasirabad	Devonport
Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers	Trimulgherry	Dover
Royal Irish Rifles	Aden	Tidworth
Royal Irish Fusiliers	Shorncliffe	Quetta
Connaught Rangers	Ferozepore	Aldershot
Leinster Regiment	Fyzabad	Cork
Royal Munster Fusiliers	Rangoon	Aldershot
Royal Dublin Fusiliers	Madras	Gravesend

However, a study of the stations of Scottish regiments, overleaf, shows that equally few of them were based in Scotland¹⁴⁵.

¹⁴²E. A. Muenger, *The British Military Dilemma*, p.35.

¹⁴³See, A. J. Semple, "The Fenian Infiltration of the British Army", *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 52, 1974, on this issue.

¹⁴⁴This table is compiled from R. Money Barnes, *The British Army of 1914*.

¹⁴⁵*ibid.*

Table 1.4. The Dispositions of Scottish Regular units, July 1914.

Regiment	1st. Battalion	2nd. Battalion
2nd. R.S.G. Dragoons	York	none
Scots Guards	Aldershot	Tower of London
Royal Scots	Allahabad	Plymouth
Royal Scots Fusiliers	Gosport	Gibraltar
K.O.S.B.	Lucknow	Dublin
Cameronians	Glasgow	Malta
Black Watch	Aldershot	Bareilly
Highland Light Inf.	Ambala	Aldershot
Gordon Highlanders	Plymouth	Cario
Seaforth Highlanders	Agra	Shorncliffe
Cameron Highlanders	Edinburgh	Poona
A&S Highlanders	Dinapore	Fort George

The disposition of Scottish troops demonstrates that in the 1902-14 period, when troops were increasingly being called out in support of the civil power, War Office policy was not to station regular units in, or near, their recruiting districts. However, the point must be made that battalions had always recruited outside their own regimental areas. In some units this was particularly noticeable, for example in 1878 five nominally Scottish regiments drew less than fifteen percent of their other ranks from Scotland.¹⁴⁶ Therefore, the fact that a battalion was stationed outside its recruiting area was no guarantee that soldiers serving in it would not confront friends or relations, when acting in aid of the civil power.

The High Command, equally had few concrete examples of indiscipline in Irish regular units on home service. The numbers of men found guilty by courts martial

¹⁴⁶H. J. Hanham, "Religion and Nationality in the Mid-Victorian Army", in M. R. D. Foot (ed.), *War and Society, Historical Essays in Honour and Memory of J. R. Western 1928-1971*, Paul Elek, London, 1973, pp.165-6.

between 1st. August 1913 and 31st. July 1914, as detailed in tables 1.5 and 1.6, overleaf, could not be considered excessive.¹⁴⁷

It will be noted that the 5th. Royal Irish Lancers and the 2nd. Battalion, Leinster Regiment, stationed in Ireland did have marginally higher courts martial rates than Irish units based elsewhere in Britain, with the exception of the Irish Guards, whose proximity to the fleshpots of London, put a heavy strain on their discipline. However, in all of the above it would appear that no soldier was tried for a specifically “political” offence. While relatively large numbers of men were tried for insubordination, disobedience, or violence to superiors, it should also be noted that these were “traditional” crimes in the British army and were not necessarily linked to the situation in Ireland.¹⁴⁸

In terms of sentences following trial by courts martial, as outlined in table 1.6, it would seem that, in peace time, the army had a relatively lenient sentencing policy. Most men found guilty following courts martial were sentenced to detention, and none received either the death penalty or a term of penal servitude, in the period in question. Two other points worth highlighting are that four courts martial verdicts were quashed or not confirmed in this period. This demonstrates that the Judge Advocate General’s Office, responsible for reviewing cases, carried out a thorough review of court martial sentences in peacetime and found that even long serving regular officers could make procedural mistakes. Secondly, nine cases did not result in a conviction during this period, which illustrates the fact that court martial trials were, by no means, forgone conclusions.

¹⁴⁷This table and the information in table 1.6 is based on appendix 5, compiled from P.R.O., WO86/60 and WO86/62, District Courts Martial Registers. Please see appendix 4 for further details on how offence and sentence tables have been compiled.

¹⁴⁸For a study of crime in the Victorian army, see A. R. Skelly, The Victorian Army at Home: The Recruitment and Terms and Conditions of the British Regular, 1859-1899, Croom Helm, London, 1977, pp.313-4.

Table 1.5 . Offences for which men serving in Irish units stationed in the United Kingdom were tried by court martial, 1st. August 1913 to 31st. July 1914.

Offences	4 R I D G	5 R I L	1/ Ir. Grd s	2/ R.I. Regt	2/ R. Inns F.	2/ R. L. Rifs	1/ R. Ir. F.	2/ C. R.	2/ L e n	2/ R. D. F.	2/ R. M. F.	T O T A L
Mutiny	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Desertion	0	0	1	1	4	1	4	1	2	0	1	15
Absence	1	0	12	0	0	5	5	0	2	0	0	25
Striking/Violent	0	0	4	1	0	2	1	0	3	3	0	14
Insubordination	0	1	4	3	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	13
Disobedience	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Quitting post	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Drunkenness	0	0	4	1	2	5	2	0	4	4	0	22
Injuring property	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	7	0	1	11
Loss of property	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Theft	1	4	0	3	1	2	1	3	3	4	1	23
Indecency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Resisting escort	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Escaping confinement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous and multiple offences	10	11	25	11	3	21	1	14	23	14	7	140
Misc.civil offences	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Self Inflicted Wound	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fraudulent enlistment	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	4
Enlisting after discharge with disgrace	1	3	2	3	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	13
False answer	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	3	1	0	7
Neglect	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Fraud	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
TOTALS	14	20	59	23	10	39	16	23	51	29	12	296

Table 1. 6. Sentences past on men serving in Irish units stationed in the United Kingdom tried by court martial, 1st. August 1913 to 31st. July 1914.

Sentences	4 R. I. D. G.	5 R. I. L.	1/ Ir. Grds	2/ R. I. Regt	2/ R. Inns F.	2/ R. I. Rifs	1/ R. Ir. F.	2/ C. R.	2/ L e I n	2/ R. D. F.	2/ R. M. F.	T O T A L
Death	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P.S.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
H.L.	2	6	3	4	1	3	1	4	9	6	0	39
Imprisonment	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Detention	9	14	54	17	7	29	12	18	33	16	12	221
C.B.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Discharged with ignominy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cashiered/reduced/ reprimanded	2	0	1	1	2	4	3	0	4	5	0	22
Stoppages, fines, etc.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Quashed/not confirmed	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	4
Not guilty/acquitted/ unable to prosecute/guilty but insane	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	3	2	0	9
TOTALS	14	20	59	23	10	39	16	23	51	29	12	296

The last breakdown in military discipline, during the Home Rule crisis of 1912-14, concerned the shooting of civilians at Bachelor's Walk in Dublin, by men of the 2nd.

Battalion, King's Own Scottish Borderers.¹⁴⁹ This event was triggered by the landing of arms at Howth, by the Irish Volunteers in July 1914, as R. V. Harrell, the Deputy Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, requisitioned troops to prevent the dispersal of the arms. From the very start this was clearly a controversial use of military forces. As Nationalists pointed out, for in April 1914 the U.V.F. had been allowed to land 25,000 rifles, without any interference, whereas the landing of 1,000 rifles by the Irish Volunteers immediately led to a swift government reaction. Sir John Ross, Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, defended his Deputy's actions, pointing out that, firstly the Howth gunrunning was carried out in broad daylight in view of the police and, secondly, there was evidence to connect the Irish Volunteers with the rifles. He further continued; "A body of more than 1000 men armed with rifles marching on Dublin which is the seat of the Irish Government, is a menace to the King's Government and that such a body constitute an unlawful assembly of a peculiarly audacious nature."¹⁵⁰

The troops, and men of the Dublin Metropolitan Police arrived at Howth to find the guns gone. The trouble occurred when the detachment of the 2nd. Battalion, King's Own Scottish Borderers was returning to barracks. They were jeered at by a crowd, had stones thrown at them and two men were wounded by revolver shots. Major Haig, in charge of the detachment, ordered his men to prepare to fire; however, this order was mis-understood and 21 men under his command, opened fire, firing between 29 and 31 rounds. This resulted in the deaths of four civilians.¹⁵¹ Following this the regiment was confined to barracks and two courts of enquiry were held on the 27th. July and 7th. August 1914. It would seem possible that only the outbreak of war prevented further action being taken against Major Haig, and Harrel was forced to resign over this incident.

¹⁴⁹This topic is best covered in J. V. O'Brien, "Dear, Dirty Dublin", pp.249-50.

¹⁵⁰Minute Ross to Under-Secretary, DublinCastle, 27/7/14, copy in Midleton Papers, P.R.O., 30/67/29.

¹⁵¹Evidence of Major Haig and Captain H. Cobden given to the Court of Enquiry held on the 27/7/14 and a "Nominal Roll of men who expended ammunition", P.R.O., WO35/60.

As noted above, Nationalists certainly portrayed this as a political incident, but it does seem that a simple breakdown in command, a not uncommon occurrence in such riot situations, took place.

Lastly, in terms of Irish troops discipline and morale, something must be said of the Republican campaign against enlistment, between the Boer War and the Great War. As early as 1842 Republicans had opposed Irish enlistment into the British Army.¹⁵² This campaign reached new heights in October 1899 when the Irish Transvaal Committee was formed by Maud Gonne and Arthur Griffith. The committee's anti-recruiting activities involved handing out leaflets, anti-recruiting tours and publicly shaming women walking out with soldiers. In addition the *United Irishman* newspaper contained a great deal of anti-recruiting propaganda.¹⁵³ Following the Boer War the Dungannon Clubs movement continued this campaign.¹⁵⁴ A typical leaflet from this organisation, issued in 1905-1906 stated; "Make a vow that you will not recognise or mix with any man who dons the livery of an Irish slave - a red or black coat, or blue jacket - and keep your children from mixing with the anti-Irish horde - the slaughterers of innocent Boer women and children."¹⁵⁵ By 1906 the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Irish Republican Brotherhood, Young Ireland Society and Irish National Foresters were all involved in the anti recruitment campaign.¹⁵⁶ On its formation in 1907 the Sinn Fein party adopted anti-recruiting as a key element of its policies; indeed, it was one of the few policies on which all Sinn Fein members agreed.

By definition the anti-recruiting campaign was focused on men who were not members of the British army, although, as can be seen from the above, the boycott of Irish

¹⁵²T. Denman, "The red livery of shame; the campaign against army recruitment in Ireland, 1899-1914," *Irish Historical Studies*, XXIX, 114, 1994, p.210.

¹⁵³*ibid*, p.213 and P. Callan, "Voluntary Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland during the First World War", unpublished Ph.D., University College Dublin, 1984, p.25.

¹⁵⁴P. Callan, "Voluntary Recruiting", p.29.

¹⁵⁵Cited in T. Denman, "The Red Livery of Shame", p.220.

¹⁵⁶*ibid*, p.221.

soldiers was also advocated. Largely, this must have been due to the legal charges which could have been brought against these various groups, if they had followed their campaign to its logical conclusion, and advocated desertion. Most of these groups were run on very tight financial budgets, and would, therefore, have found great difficulty in defending themselves from such charges.¹⁵⁷ The actual success of the anti-recruiting campaign appears to have been minimal; most historians agree that fluctuations in Irish recruitment figures in the 1899-1914 period were a reflection of employment patterns, rather than political preferences.¹⁵⁸

Nevertheless, the anti-recruiting campaign did have some success in alienating Irish recruits from their homeland. It was not unusual for Irish soldiers to be publicly insulted in this period and their female companions could also be subject to ridicule.¹⁵⁹ Equally, the campaign did produce some misgivings amongst the more thoughtful Irish recruits, for example, John Lucy, joining the army on the 3rd. January 1912 recalled;

Avoiding the recruiting sergeant, because I objected to presenting myself to any of that bluff, florid, beribboned type, we walked into the local barracks and took oath to serve and protect the King and his relations, and to obey the

¹⁵⁷The only actually seditious literature circulated amongst troops in this period was by Rowland Hunt, urging troops to support the U.V.F., see, I. F. W. Beckett, The Army and the Curragh Incident, p.5 and a pro-Labour pamphlet circulated to troops by Keir Hardie, during 1911 and 1912, see, P.R.O., HO144/213549. However the government's concern over the possibility of indiscipline occurring in army units policing strikes is demonstrated by the use of the Incitement to Mutiny Act in 1912. In February 1912 *The Syndicalist* reprinted a leaflet entitled "Open Letter to British Soldiers" which urged soldiers to refuse to obey orders if ordered to act against strikers. Guy Bowman, Tom Mann, B. E. Buck, C. E. Buck and Fred Crowsley were all given prison sentences following their prosecutions under this Act, which had not been utilised for over one hundred years. J. Blake, "Civil Disorder in Britain, 1910-39", pp.132-3 and B. Holton, British Syndicalism 1900-1914, Myths and Realities, Pluto Press Ltd., London, 1976, p.115.

¹⁵⁸P. Callan, "Voluntary Recruiting", p.23 and D. Fitzpatrick, "Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922", in T. Bartlett and K. Jeffrey, A Military History of Ireland, p.380.

¹⁵⁹E. A. Muenger, The British Military Dilemma, pp.75-6.

superiors set over us by him for a period of seven years with the colours and five in the reserve.

We swore with some national qualms of conscience. As a sop to our feelings we chose an Irish regiment, and one stationed far away at the other end of Ireland.¹⁶⁰

Lastly, in this chapter some consideration should be given to discipline and morale in the various paramilitary forces which developed in Ireland between 1910 and 1914, especially to the most developed organisation, the U.V.F.. This is important, as while it would be wrong to state either that all U.V.F. members joined the British army during the Great War, or that the 36th. (Ulster) Division was formed exclusively from U.V.F. members, a considerable number of members of this force and from the Irish National Volunteers did enlist during 1914-18.¹⁶¹

By October 1913 the U.V.F., officially formed in January of that year, appeared to be a numerous and well disciplined force, with a considerable number of former British army officers heading it. Certainly Detective Sergeant Edwards of the Royal Irish Constabulary present during a parade at Balmoral show grounds in September 1913 was most impressed by what he witnessed.¹⁶² However, the elaborate mass military displays which the force frequently indulged in, disguised a number of basic problems within the Ulster Volunteers.

Firstly, there was a split in the movement on political issues; this was apparent in the competition between Orange Lodges and Unionist Clubs to control U.V.F. units, at a higher level between "hawks" and "doves" in the Ulster Unionist leadership and, lastly,

¹⁶⁰J. F. Lucy, *There's a Devil in the Drum*, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1938, p.15.

¹⁶¹These issues will be considered in greater depth in chapter 4.

¹⁶²Report of Detective Sergeant Edwards, R.I.C. in "Report for the use of the Cabinet, October 1913", P.R.O., W.O. 141/26.

between “provincial” officers and the Belfast based High Command. Secondly, there was some confusion over the role of the force; was it to be prepared to fight British troops, or was its *raison d’être* simply to keep the Unionist hooligan element under control? Equally, was the U.V.F. to be trained in regular or guerrilla tactics? Thirdly, as a military unit, the force remained poorly trained and equipped. Fourthly, officers had few disciplinary powers over their men. Lastly, morale in many units remained low, manifesting itself either in non-attendance at drills or attempts to side with more sectarian Unionist groups.

The origins of the U.V.F. were largely in the Orange Order and Unionist Clubs movement, elements of which had started to drill by March 1912. Other U.V.F. units had more obscure foundations; in Magherafelt the “Catch my Pal” Temperance Society had started drilling twice weekly by May 1912¹⁶³ and, in Londonderry, the Church Lad’s Brigade had considerable links with the U.V.F.¹⁶⁴ Elsewhere, many army veterans began drilling men on their own initiative, for example, Osbourne Young, a former Sergeant in the Imperial Yeomanry, started to train an embryonic cavalry unit in Omagh in October 1912.¹⁶⁵

Thus, when the force began to form, it had a very “democratic basis”. With the foundation of the U.V.F. proper in January 1913, with its own staff, headed by Lieutenant-General Sir George Richardson, late of the Indian army, the force became more hierarchical and centralised. This witnessed some serious disciplinary problems in local units. For example, in Newry, the Unionist Club tried to regain control of the volunteer movement from the officer appointed by the U.V.F. headquarters.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³Report by District Inspector J. Wilband, Royal Irish Constabulary, to the County Inspector, Co. Londonderry, 24/5/12, P.R.O., WO141/26.

¹⁶⁴Report by C. G. Cary, County Inspector, Co. Londonderry to the Inspector General, R.I.C., 31/7/12, WO141/26 and *The Irish Times*, 29/7/12.

¹⁶⁵Report by Constable T. Hynes, R.I.C., 10/10/12, WO141/26.

¹⁶⁶P.R.O.N.I., D.1540/3/12, cited, P. Buckland, *Irish Unionism 1885-1923*, A

More seriously, Colonel Oliver Nugent, the Commanding Officer of U.V.F. units in Cavan became very distrustful of the Belfast dominated U.V.F. headquarters, fearing that they would sacrifice border counties in a political settlement and that “hawks” in Belfast would put unionists in border counties in personal danger. Thus, he began styling his unit as the Cavan Volunteer Force and made it clear that his men would only serve in Cavan. Indeed, commenting on the situation in County Cavan, Nugent stated;

The County of Cavan therefore is geographically and politically isolated from North East Ulster, with a small Unionist community scattered over an area of 460,000 acres in the midst of a Nationalist population.

It is clear that as far as this County is concerned there will be no men available for other work after the requirements of home defence have been provided for,..., The Organisation proposed has nothing in common with a Military Organisation,..., I have therefore used no purely military titles and so far as the forces enrolled in the County are concerned I prefer to call them the Cavan Volunteer Force and not the Cavan Regiment.¹⁶⁷

Likewise, Captain the Hon. Arthur O’ Neill, M.P., Commanding Officer of the County Antrim, U.V.F. made it clear that in the event of a confrontation none of his men would be available to serve outside the County.¹⁶⁸

Equally, the Ulster Unionist leadership seemed divided over the use of force, which can have done little to reassure rank and file U.V.F. members. This “hawks”/“doves” split became most obvious in January 1914 when Godfrey Fetherstonhaugh, M.P.

documentary history, H.M.S.O., Belfast, 1973, p.232.

¹⁶⁷Typescript booklet entitled, “C.V.F. Scheme, Copy No. VI”, compiled by Colonel Sir Oliver Nugent, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., MIC/571/9, pp.1-2.

¹⁶⁸P.R.O.N.O., D.1238/121, cited J. Howie, “Militarising a Society”, p.217.

for North Fermanagh, publicly suggested a compromise settlement to prevent civil war, at a time when Carson was relying on the threat of force to gain concessions from the Liberal government.¹⁶⁹

The actual role of the force caused great confusion. Carson seems to have been motivated to raise the U.V.F. out of fears that the Unionist hooligan element in Belfast would riot over the Home Rule Bill, giving the government the excuse to move in troops and suppress Unionist opposition.¹⁷⁰ Equally, it was clear that; “any local and armed aggression by the loyalists would have had disastrous implications for support in England and within English Conservatism.”¹⁷¹ Thus it was clear that the U.V.F. could not be an “army” in the real sense of the word, as any bloodshed would see sympathy for Unionism in Britain evaporate.

Also, political considerations dictated the method in which the force would fight. Realistically the U.V.F.’s only hope to secure victory, or at least a negotiated settlement with crown forces would be to adopt Boer-style guerrilla tactics. However, as Jackson has stressed, fighting such a “dirty war” would seriously damage Unionist support in Britain.¹⁷²

There were wider concerns about the U.V.F.’s ability to fight. Lord Dunleath stated; “I do not believe our men are prepared to go into action against part of His Majesty’s Forces.”¹⁷³ Likewise, Sir James Craig’s view of the U.V.F.’s war, seems to have been based on a fear that Ulstermen did not have sufficient morale to act as guerrillas, he noted; “Neither this country or your men are suited to ‘Guerrilla warfare’,

¹⁶⁹P. Bew, Ideology and the Irish Question; Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism, 1912-16, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994, p.102.

¹⁷⁰*ibid*, p.101.

¹⁷¹A. Jackson, “Unionist Myths, 1912-85”, Past and Present, 136, 1992, p.181.

¹⁷²*ibid*, p.182.

¹⁷³Letter, Dunleath to Carson, March 1915(?), cited, P. Bew, Ideology and the Irish Question, p.111.

'Boer tactics' and so on. If you stake all on a big fight, there will be no doubts or hesitations."¹⁷⁴

Equally, in a rather bizarre move by Craig, at a time when most U.V.F. members were training to oppose Crown forces, in November 1913 he actually suggested that the U.V.F. should be incorporated in the Territorial Force to make up the deficiency in its ranks!¹⁷⁵ This may simply have been an attempt to demonstrate the loyalty of the U.V.F. and their determination to oppose a foreign invasion of Britain. (This theme was developed by Sir Henry Craick, Tory M.P. for Glasgow and Aberdeen Universities who, on inspecting U.V.F. units in June 1914 stated; "the Empire will probably soon need these men to protect the East coast of England from the invasion of the Kaiser."¹⁷⁶). Nevertheless it does illustrate the lack of planning that had been made for the U.V.F.'s strategy and tactics in a conflict with British forces.

The U.V.F. remained poorly trained and equipped, although it was often able to hold impressive displays, the view of the force expressed by journalists had often more to do with their political bias than the actual efficiency of the force. While a special correspondent of the unionist *Yorkshire Post* described a U.V.F. parade in Antrim in 1913 thus;

As far as I could detect in very careful observation, there were not half a dozen of them unqualified by physique or age to play a manly part. They reminded me more than anything else - except that but a few of them were beyond the best fighting age - of the finest class of our National Reservists. There was certainly nothing of the mock soldier about them. Led by keen, smart-looking officers, they marched past in quarter column with fine, swinging steps, as if they had been in

¹⁷⁴Memorandum by Craig, 26/7/13, cited, J. Howie, "Militarising a Society", pp.222-3.

¹⁷⁵*ibid.*, p.223.

¹⁷⁶Cited, P. Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question*, p.115.

training for years,...., officers who have had the teaching of them tell me that the rapidity with which they have become efficient is greater than has ever come within their experience in training recruits for either the Territorials or the Regular Service. That is a tribute to the resolute and determined spirit which animates them.¹⁷⁷

By contrast, the Nationalist, *Irish News*, described one U.V.F. demonstration as ; “a straggling wavy line of farm yokels, chauffeurs, grooms and veterans of seventy winters stumbled forward in ragtime... causing much hilarity to the onlookers.”¹⁷⁸

The U.V.F. did have an impressive number of serving and retired officers and other ranks acting as drill masters in the movement, however, the usefulness of some of these men in training the volunteers is questionable. A Royal Irish Constabulary report on the man drilling Orangemen in Magherafelt in September 1912, noted; “The Instructor is Robert Hamilton of Rainey Street. He was a Private in the Inniskilling Fusiliers, and was invalided on account of insanity. He does not belong to the Army Reserve.”¹⁷⁹ Equally, as Orr notes of the Tyrone U.V.F. camp held in October 1913;

the camp would have enhanced the esprit de corps of the Tyrone U.V.F. and, in some ways, would have improved its military efficiency, but many of the lectures were delivered by army officers whose experience of war had been in the outposts of the British Empire, to men whose knowledge of fighting was nil. For example, the ‘Lecture on Scouting and Intelligence Duties in the Field’ had more relevance to the South African veldt than to the lush fields of Co. Tyrone - the

¹⁷⁷*Yorkshire Post*, 22/9/13, cited in, P. Buckland, *Irish Unionism: 2, Ulster Unionism and the Origins of Northern Ireland, 1886-1922*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1973, p.59.

¹⁷⁸*Irish News*, 23/9/13, cited, P. Orr, *The Road to the Somme*, pp.13-14.

¹⁷⁹Report by District Inspector, J. Wilband, 21/9/12, WO141/26.

lecturer bade scouts to remember that 'a low thick dust indicates infantry while a light, high cloud of dust is raised by cavalry'.¹⁸⁰

Also some regular officers drilling U.V.F. units verged on the antediluvian and must have forgotten almost anything they ever knew about company drill. For example, Major-General W. E. Montgomery, Scots Fusiliers (retired) was certainly not in the prime of life, when witnessed drilling men in County Down in 1913.¹⁸¹ Equally, many of the men officering the U.V.F. were amateur in the extreme. As Buckland observes; "The orders given were not always conventional. One commander used to halt his men with 'Whoa', and another commander, anxious to impress a rival platoon, was heard to give his special version of the order to move off: 'By the right, left, Quick March!'"¹⁸²

In broader terms there was a serious problem in training generally, as Jackson notes; "truancy was a marked problem in certain U.V.F. regiments, and,..., officers found it much easier to mobilise their men for a weekend at camp, or for a day out in Belfast, than for sustained training programmes."¹⁸³ Training camps did little to correct this problem due to the poor state of U.V.F. regimental finances. For example, men of the Tyrone Regiment were expected to pay seven shillings, a considerable sum which many members would have been unable to pay, to attend a three day camp.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰P. Orr, *The Road to the Somme*, p.17.

¹⁸¹"Return of ex-soldiers acting as Instructors to U.C., etc.", August 1913, P.R.O., WO141/26. Major General W. E. Montgomery was born on the 18th. July 1847 and was therefore 66 years old when he was drilling the Greyabbey U.V.F. company. Details from Montgomery's tombstone, the Abbey, Grey Abbey, Co. Down.

¹⁸²P. Buckland, *Irish Unionism*, 2, 1973, p.59.

¹⁸³A. Jackson, "Unionist Myths", p.174. On wider problems in U.V.F. training see; Kilmorey papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.1268/3/5, (R. Hall on 2nd. Battalion, County Down Regiment), Lowry papers, P.R.O.N.I., D1132/6/14, (drill attendance of Dungannon U.V.F.), Peel papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.889/4c/4, (relating to Armagh U.V.F.) and J. B. Hamilton papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.1518/3/8-9 (on attendance in the U.V.F. generally).

¹⁸⁴J. Howie, "Militarising a Society", p.219.

Absenteeism in the U.V.F. was somewhat understandable, as by January 1914, some units had been formed for over a year and the attraction of endless drilling with wooden dummy guns soon began to pale. In January 1914 the 10,700 strong County Antrim U.V.F. had only 150, .303 rifles and 200, Italian Vetterlis,¹⁸⁵ the latter without ammunition. This meant one rifle to every 28-29 men; and one rifle with ammunition to every 59 men. As U.V.F. leaders in Antrim stated; "Battalion Commanders all report that the men are manifesting considerable disappointment at the present condition of affairs and are tiring of elementary drill."¹⁸⁶

The Larne gun-running of April 1914 should thus be seen as an attempt to boost morale in the U.V.F., rather than an attempt to properly arm the movement. By April 1914 the volunteers possessed five types of rifle with varying calibres. As Jackson comments; "Larne, therefore, turned an unarmed force into a badly armed force."¹⁸⁷

U.V.F. officers, somewhat like their counterparts in the Territorial Force, wielded pitifully few disciplinary powers. The strongest power they possessed was that of dismissal. As Buckland notes of the West Belfast, Special Service Section, under Captain F. P. Crozier's command; "Rather than face the disgrace of having his rifle and uniform taken from him, and having the women and children call after him in the street, a special volunteer would make any sacrifice, even to giving up drink."¹⁸⁸ Previous to April 1914 men who regularly attended drilling were rewarded with being allowed to take care of a gun as an incentive to continued training.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵The latter were purchased from the "bargain basement" of the international arms market, having been withdrawn from service in the Italian Army in 1887. See, J. Whittam, The Politics of the Italian Army, 1861-1918, Croom Helm, London, 1977, p.194.

¹⁸⁶"Statement on the arms question, laid before Sir Edward Carson and Sir James Craig", 20/1/14, P.R.O.N.I., D.1238/108, cited, P. Buckland, Irish Unionism, H.M.S.O., 1973, p.243.

¹⁸⁷A. Jackson, "Unionist Myths", p.183.

¹⁸⁸P. Buckland, Irish Unionism, 2, p.64.

¹⁸⁹Howie, "Militarising a Society", p.220.

The last problem which faced those responsible for discipline in the U.V.F. was the attraction of more rabidly sectarian politics. Inter-communal rioting was a relatively common occurrence in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Belfast. Equally, in at least one rural U.V.F. battalion, the 2nd. Battalion, County Down Regiment, there was a breakdown in discipline in October 1913, The battalion's adjutant, in a report on the affair, stated;

During a route march of the Newry Volunteers to Bessbrook. The Local Band came with us & I instructed them as to the road to take & I was surprised when I found that they passed by the turning arranged - when I went up to the Leader of the Band he informed me they would go on to the 'Pump' a little further on & as we were entering the Village of Bessbrook I consented A policeman appeared on the scene shortly afterwards & informed me he had been requested by the principal Unionist Leaders in the Village,...., to ask me not to march the Volunteers to this 'Pump' as it was 'out of bounds' neither parties Unionist or Nationalist being allowed there so I went up to the Band Leader & asked him to halt the band but they would not do so and said they would go to the 'Pump' & very threatening language was used to me & I was told I had no control over the Band (which I admit) & consigned to 'Hades", etc., etc.

I immediately wheeled the Volunteers to the left down a side road & halted them, the Band going straight ahead - There was some grumbling in the ranks about the Band & I got the opinion of three Committee Members,...., they unanimously decided not to wait for the band coming back but to march back without it (I might mention that a few men of the front section went on with the Band). I turned the Battn. about, right-wheel & marched back accordingly.

Instructor Morrow called on the men to fall out & follow the Band inciting them to disobey orders (really mutiny) but I am proud to say when I called the

Vols. to stand steady & obey my orders not a single Volunteer fell out showing splendid discipline of which any Line Regt. might feel proud. It appears to have been a pre-arranged affair by the band & we would be well rid of them & also any others refusing to obey orders.¹⁹⁰

Therefore, the U.V.F. despite being a large organisation (boasting 90,000 to 100,000 members at its peak)¹⁹¹ capable of holding impressive military pageants and one highly impressive military operation (the landing and dispersal of arms at Larne, Bangor and Donaghadee in April 1914) suffered from serious weaknesses. The Ulster Unionist leadership was split over the role of the force, morale in many units was low, at least until arms were provided, retired officers and other ranks were often poor instructors, officers possessed few disciplinary powers and hard-line loyalists tried to draw some units into sectarian incidents. Thus, the usefulness of the U.V.F. as a training unit for men joining the 36th. (Ulster) Division, or other units of the British army during 1914-18 must be severely questioned.

The Irish Volunteers, although finally outnumbering the U.V.F. by August 1914 were never as well trained or equipped as the Unionist force. Partly, this was due to the late formation of the force as compared to the U.V.F.. Also, the Irish Volunteers failed to attract the numbers of retired army officers which the U.V.F. enrolled. The highest ranking officer involved in the Irish Volunteers was Colonel Maurice Moore, formerly of the Connaught Rangers. Significantly, while Lieutenant-General Sir George Richardson

¹⁹⁰Letter, R. Nesbitt, Adjutant, 2nd. Battalion, County Down Regiment, U.V.F. to Captain Robert Hall, 8/10/13, P.R.O.N.I., D.1540/3/14, cited in P. Buckland, *Irish Unionism*, H.M.S.O., 1973, pp.233-4.

¹⁹¹In March 1914, Neville Chamberlain, Inspector-General of the Royal Irish Constabulary reported the strength of the U.V.F. to be 81,410, distributed as follows; Antrim, 11,083; Armagh, 7,091; Belfast, 24,509; Cavan, 3,406; Donegal, 2,755; Fermanagh, 2,791; Down, 10,332; Londonderry (City and County), 8,468; Monaghan, 1,883 and Tyrone, 9,142. See Report by Chamberlain, 12/3/14, P.R.O., WO141/4.

was appointed General Officer Commanding, U.V.F. Moore was firmly subjected to political control, being appointed merely, Inspector-General of the Irish Volunteers.

Equally, unlike the U.V.F., the Irish Volunteers were basically unarmed when war broke out. The Howth gun-running of July 1914 had brought just 1,000 rifles into Ireland, almost all of them going to the Dublin Volunteers, most of whom followed Eoin MacNeill in the volunteer split which occurred shortly after the outbreak of war.¹⁹²

The Irish Volunteers were best organised in the North of Ireland, as Nationalists there realised that, in the event of civil war, they would have to protect themselves from the U.V.F..¹⁹³ However, even here, morale cannot have been high as Moore refused to send any arms to the North as; "We are not and will not be in a position to resist an attack in the North and it will just be handing the arms over to the Ulstermen. If the Carsonites do nothing the arms are no use; if they do they will simply surround any force we have and take away the arms."¹⁹⁴

The only plans Captain George Berkeley, the C.O. of the Belfast Irish Volunteers, had prepared, in the event of Ulster Unionists declaring a Provisional Government were almost designed to destroy morale and discipline. His plan was to attempt to extricate his men from Belfast and retreat South, leaving their families to the tender mercies of the Ulster Provisional Government!¹⁹⁵

Major M. Earle, of the Grenadier Guards, involved in army Intelligence work in Ireland, observed the Dublin Volunteers at drill in March, 1914 and pointed out a number of their weaknesses commenting;

¹⁹²D. Fitzpatrick, The Two Irelands 1912-39, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p.57.

¹⁹³E. Phoenix, Northern Nationalism, Nationalist Politics, Partition and the Catholic Minority in Northern Ireland 1890-1940, Ulster Historical Foundation, Belfast, 1994, pp.14-15.

¹⁹⁴Colonel Maurice Moore papers, N.L.I., 10,545, cited, J. Howie, "Militarising a Society", p.226.

¹⁹⁵Captain George Berkeley's Diaries, N.L.I., 7,880 and 10,923, cited *ibid*, p.226.

It was obvious that the men had some slight previous instruction, for they fell in well and stood to attention in quite a soldierlike way,..., There were three Sergeant Instructors who were obviously old N.C.O.s. Two appeared to be Irish and one English. There were also some organisers who helped or superintended, and who were evidently not military men.

The men were very poor at extending, and reminded one of the average Territorial company one sees in England. One Sergeant instructor encouraged the men by saying, 'You will get shot if you huddle together like that.'

No arms or sticks were carried. The public were admitted to the field, and there were perhaps a dozen or so spectators who appeared interested. The men drilling were chiefly of what appeared to be the shop assistant class. Very well dressed. In fact, they corresponded exactly to the class of men one sees in a drill hall of a middle class T.[erritorial] F.[orce] unit in London. They were, however, of an older or more mature type, the vast majority being between 25 and 35 years of age. There was one boy of about 16, a couple of older men of 50 perhaps, and two or three undersized weaklings, but the bulk of the men were physically 'good food for powder'.

It rained hard the whole time, with a cold wind, and the longish grass was very wet. But all ranks were very keen on the work, and they laughed when they made mistakes in a way which, if rather shocking to the soldier, showed they were very happy and keen.

There was an absence of officers or of anyone who could be classified as a leader, but one fat middle-aged gentleman in a mackintosh assisted the Sergeant Instructors to get the men to the correct extension.

This body, which has been drilling in the open on Wednesdays and Saturdays for close on a couple of months, is reputed to be the most efficient of the

I.[rish] N.[ational] V.[olunteers]. It is, as far as is known, entirely deficient of the class of men of the officer type, and in consequence is probably a good deal inferior in fighting value to the U.V.F.. One of the rules of the I.N.V. is that each man must purchase a uniform or a rifle. The pattern of uniform has not yet been chosen, and, although a badge has been designed, none were seen today. The D.[ublin] M.[etropolitan] Police know nothing of any arms either in possession of the men or stored in any house.¹⁹⁶

Lastly, something should be said of the smallest of the pre-war paramilitary groups, the Irish Citizens' Army. This force had been created during the 1913 lockout, to maintain order amongst the strikers. Most of its members were drawn from the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, and it is not inconceivable that some later saw service in the British army. However, by 1914 the force numbered only around 200 men. Nevertheless it was seen as a formidable force by British military intelligence, a report of March 1914 noting;

The most dangerous (from peace of the city point of view) party drilling is White's citizen army. It drills quite openly and [the] Government has been asked to stop it. The men consist of unemployed and [the] lowest class in the city, and being led by a mad man might cause serious trouble.¹⁹⁷

In conclusion, the 1902-14 period saw a heightened awareness of the importance of discipline and morale in modern warfare. It was believed that twentieth century firepower could only be overcome by attacking troops with high morale and kept under

¹⁹⁶Intelligence summary, 28/3/14, P.R.O., WO141/4.

¹⁹⁷Intelligence summary, 23/3/14, P.R.O., WO141/4.

tight discipline. Nevertheless, the British army, generally more pragmatic and with more campaign experience than its European counterparts did not adopt the 'cult of the offensive' wholesale. This meant that, especially in relation to the use of cavalry, the British army was better prepared psychologically for the Great War than its counterparts.

The period 1902-14 also saw strains put on army morale and discipline when called upon in aid of the civil power. The 1908 reforms and future of the Special Reserve battalions in relation to the defence of Ireland suggests that a basic mistrust of Irish troops discipline persisted in the British army, based largely on the fears of Fenian infiltration of Irish units, which had occurred in the 1860s.

Equally, the Third Home Rule controversy, the Curragh Incident and the numbers of British Army officers and other ranks who helped to train the U.V.F. do show that traditional fears of the political subversion of Irish units was not misplaced in this period, although the major threat now came from the opposite end of the political spectrum, to that initially associated with sedition. Indeed, by April 1914, one could argue, the traditional concern over the loyalty and discipline of Irish units was being voiced over many component units of the British army.

Lastly, the paramilitary, political armies raised in Ireland between 1912 and 1914, despite occasional impressive parades, faced serious disciplinary and morale problems. This issue will be explored further in chapter four, but, for the present, it should be observed that the U.V.F. and Irish Volunteers were far from perfectly disciplined and certainly were not in a position to be absorbed directly into the British army as many Unionist and Nationalist politicians desired.

Chapter 2.

The Administration of British Military Justice, 1914-1918.

The system of military justice used by the British army during the First World War had not been designed for the mass citizen armies that the British government raised during that conflict. Instead, the disciplinary system used by the British Expeditionary Force between 1914 and 1918 had been designed for the small, paternalistic, regular army of the late Victorian period, in the form of the 1879 Army Act. In this chapter consideration will be given to how accurately courts martial reflected disciplinary problems in the British army and how well this system was adapted to the conditions of the Great War and the new situations which this brought about.

Other key issues to consider in this work, particularly in view of the damning criticisms made of the courts martial system operating on the Western Front by A. Babington and Putkowski and Sykes, are the differences between courts martial and Edwardian civil courts, the legal knowledge of officers and other ranks, the legal errors made at courts martial, the appeals system available to those tried by military courts, the extent to which Dominion and Imperial troops (especially Canadians and members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) were treated in comparison to their British counterparts and how British military justice differs to the legal system used by other powers during the conflict. Lastly, the issue of “informal discipline”, as it operated within the B.E.F., must be considered, as it is quite clear that a number of soldiers received punishment without going through the formal procedure of a court martial.

Between 1914 and 1918 four different types of courts martial were used by the British army and it is worth examining these in some depth. Firstly, there was the General Court Martial; this was the military court which was given the strongest powers and was the only one capable of trying an officer. If held in the United Kingdom, India, Malta or

Gibraltar, it had to consist of a minimum of nine officers; elsewhere it had to consist of at least five. The officers were, if possible, to come from different corps and every member had to have held a commission for a minimum of three years.¹ The President had to be, at the very least, a Major. During the 1913 to 1919 period 2,828 General Courts Martial were held in Britain and 3,244 overseas.²

Secondly, there was the Field General Court Martial; as the *Manual of Military Law* states; "A Field General Court Martial can only be convened on active service or abroad for the trial of offences which it is not practicable, with due regard to the public service, to try by an ordinary General Court Martial."³ In other words, Field General Courts Martial were, largely, wartime expedients and, as a result, the differences between their composition and that of a General Court Martial are very marked. A Field General Court Martial could consist of as little as two officers, although in this case it could not award any sentence exceeding two years imprisonment or three months field punishment.⁴

¹War Office, *Manual of Military Law*, H.M.S.O., London, 1914, pp.36-7.

²War Office, *General Annual Reports of the British Army (including the Territorial Force) for the period from 1st. October 1913 to 30th. September 1919*, Accounts and Papers, Cmd. 1193, H.M.S.O., London, 1921, pp.82-3. It should be noted that there are glaring differences between the statistics available relating to courts martial, partly explained by the different time periods being covered in each. In relation to General Courts Martial an unpublished War Office table of statistics, considering the period August 1914 to September 1919 puts the figures at 2,828 held at home and 3,224 abroad (P. R. O., WO93/49, pp.75-8). Meanwhile another government report, considering the period 4th. August 1914 to 31st. March 1920, states the numbers of General Courts Martial as 3,120 held at home and 3,442 abroad (War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914-20*, H.M.S.O., London, 1922, pp.643-5). In the database relating to men tried by courts martial while serving in Irish units on the Western Front, 63 officers and men were tried by General Courts Martial (see appendix 5), which given that by 1917/18 Irish units accounted for only something in the region of one percent of British troops in France suggests that the figures given in the *General Annual Report* are much too low.

³War Office, *Manual of Military Law*, p.39.

⁴The fact that so many sentences of this type were awarded by Field General Courts Martial sitting on the Western Front suggests that, in many cases, only two officers were available for the court. See appendix 6.

However, it was more normal for this court to consist of a minimum of three officers of at least two years commissioned service. The powers of the Field General Court Martial were broadly similar to those of the General Court Martial. Between 1913 and 1919; 373 Field General Courts Martial were held in Britain and 162,683 abroad.⁵

Thirdly, there were District Courts Martial. These could not award a sentence greater than two years imprisonment and could only sentence an N.C.O. to forfeiture of pay. The court had to consist of a minimum of three officers of at least two years commissioned service, if possible, the officers were to be from different units. During the 1913 to 1919 period; 161,186 District Courts Martial were held in Britain and 5,216 overseas.⁶

Lastly, Regimental Courts Martial were held during the Great War. This court could sentence a soldier to a maximum of forty-two days detention. The court had to consist of at least three officers who had held a commission for at least one year. Regimental Courts Martial will receive little attention in this study as it is unclear whether any were actually held on the Western Front, or indeed in any theatre of war. However, it is apparent that they were held amongst reserve units based within the United Kingdom.⁷

It should, also, be noted that Commanding Officers held considerable personal powers to discipline the men under their command. They were entitled to detain a soldier

⁵War Office, General Annual Reports of the British Army, pp.86-87. Again these figures are contradicted by the other sources available, which cite 312 cases tried at home and 117,506 abroad (P.R.O., WO93/49, pp.75-7) and 312 Field General Courts Martial held at home and 154,399 abroad (War Office, Statistics of the Military Effort, pp.643-5).

⁶War Office, General Annual Reports of the British Army, pp.84-85. Other sources suggest that 131,147 District Courts Martial were held at home and 3,162 abroad (P.R.O., WO93/49, pp.77-8) or that 137,683 were held at home and 5,326 abroad (War Office, Statistics of the Military Effort, p.643).

⁷See volume of Routine Orders for the 3rd. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 1914-1918, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers' Museum, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh. This makes frequent mention of Regimental Courts Martial being held within the battalion throughout the war.

and/or stop his pay for up to twenty-eight days on their own authority, without recourse to any form of court martial. Company officers could also impose lesser punishments (normally consisting of extra drill) on soldiers who had been involved in minor military offences, for example, being late for parade.⁸ However, if the accused requested a court martial this had to be held and the available evidence suggests that a reasonably large number of soldiers, throughout the war, were aware of this right and made use of it.⁹

Full details of cases tried by C.O.s or company commanders were never kept in a systematic, centralised fashion, and few actual case details have survived. However, it would seem fairly clear that, in most cases, the C.O. acted in a reasonably impartial fashion. The then Private R. McKay, attending an orderly room parade in the 109th. Field Ambulance in May 1915 noted;

One man, Joe McMinn, was charged by the Sergeant-Major with refusing to obey an order, and the sequel was rather interesting. After the charge was read out by the S[er]g[ean]t. Major, McMinn asked the Commanding Officer could he cross question the S[er]g[ean]t. Major. Given permission, McMinn began by asking the S[er]g[ean]t. Major, 'When I was doing extra drill, were there not a number of other men also undergoing punishment?' The S[er]g[ean]t. Major admitted this was so. McMinn: 'You gave me an order to quick march, and I obeyed; now I was at the far end of the parade ground and my back was toward you. When you gave the order 'About Turn' did you name me?' S[er]g[ean]t. Major: 'No, I did not.' McMinn, 'How, then, was I to know the order 'About Turn' was for me?' The result was the case was dismissed.

⁸War Office, Manual of Military Law, p.27.

⁹See Courts Martial Registers, 1914-18, P.R.O., Kew, WO213/1-28 for examples of this.

And, after we came out of the orderly room the S[er]g[ean]t. Major came up to McMinn and said 'Congratulations, McMinn, you got out of that well.'¹⁰

However, not all hearings by company officers were conducted within the requirements of the Army Act. Second Lieutenant Percy McElwaine on joining the 19th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles at Newcastle, Co. Down in August 1916, remembered;

I had to take company orderly room and I had a case in which a man was charged with refusing to go into the sea on a bathing parade. The only evidence provided was a note written by the sergeant in charge of the party. I refused to accept this and as no witness was produced to prove either that the order had been given or that it was disobeyed I dismissed the case. This got round like wildfire and the cases in the other companies were dismissed too. The company commanders did not like my 'technicalities'.¹¹

Clearly, therefore, the orderly room system was open to some abuse. However, neither the War Office or the Judge Advocate General appear to have raised any concerns about this, which suggests that, in general, this system was seen as reasonably fair and impartial.

If a C.O. felt that a case should be referred to a court martial then he had to establish a court of enquiry. The role of members of this court was simply to collect evidence, they then sent this to the officer who had established the court of enquiry. The proceedings of a court of enquiry were not admissible as evidence in a court martial.¹² They were simply used by a C.O. to decide whether or not to refer a case to a court

¹⁰Entry for 10/5/15 in the diary of Sergeant R. McKay, 109th. Field Ambulance, I.W.M.

¹¹Sir Percy McElwaine papers, I.W.M., 92/35/1, p.71.

¹²War Office, Manual of Military Law, p.638.

martial. Members of the court were not to express any comments about a man's innocence or guilt or to suggest whether a court martial should be held.¹³

Few transcripts of courts of enquiry survive. Two examples which have been found during this research do suggest that courts of enquiry did proceed in an unbiased fashion. The first, concerning a breach of battalion anti-gas measures in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment in May 1915 took evidence from five witnesses.¹⁴ The second, relating to accidental injuries to Second Lieutenant R. W. Spurgin of the 4th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in November 1917 collected just two witness statements.¹⁵ While the Manual of Military Law made no specification regarding the numbers of and rank of officers sitting on a court of enquiry, in both these cases, the court consisted of three officers of the rank of lieutenant or captain.

This, was in theory, the constitution of courts martial held during the Great War. It is now important to consider how these courts operated in practice and to what extent they dispensed a form of justice recognisable to those familiar with Edwardian civil courts. In this study, Field General and General Courts Martial transcripts, particularly those relating to Irish troops, will be used as records on District and Regimental Courts martial are incomplete and do not lend themselves to a comparative study.

Field General Courts Martial are the most controversial element of the British military justice system as it operated during the Great War as they were, of all the types of courts martial, the ones responsible for sentencing the highest number of men to death. Before examining these courts in more detail, it should be noted that, with few exceptions,

¹³ibid, pp.637-8.

¹⁴ "Report of a Court of Enquiry into why R.[egimental] O.[rder] No. 181 Para.[graph] 3, 18/5/15 was not complied with on 24/5/15 during a gas attack on 2/r.[oyal] I.[rish] Reg[men]t.", N.A.M., 5010/29.

¹⁵Papers of a Court of Enquiry held at Luddan Camp, Buncrana, 6/11/17 in "Record of Officers' Services, 4th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers", P.R.O., WO68/382.

only files relating to soldiers who were actually executed following their court martial, have been preserved.¹⁶ This makes the sample used both unscientific and limited in scope.

In most capital Field General Court Martial cases it would appear that the court consisted of three to four officers. Interestingly, while, when Irish regular soldiers were being tried, officers from non-Irish units predominated at the courts martial, when New Army soldiers were being tried, the officers were generally drawn from service battalions of the accused's regiment. There are a variety of explanations for this; perhaps New Army officers, being rather protective of their own status, preferred not to demonstrate embarrassing disciplinary problems in their own units to regular officers. However, it seems more likely that officers simply wanted to deal with courts martial regimentally, whenever possible and the New Army organisation allowed this, while the manner in which regular units were brigaded, at least before 1916, generally prevented it. It is unclear whether there was any real difference in terms of how the accused's case was heard if the officers comprising the court were from his regiment or members of other units. Some officers undoubtedly relished the opportunity to make examples of some of their men, but, at the same time, the paternalistic nature of the British regimental system could have served to help the accused.¹⁷

¹⁶During this research the case transcripts of two officers tried by courts martial but not executed were discovered. The officers concerned were Major C. H. Stainforth, M.C., 7/8th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, tried on the 5/1/18 for drunkenness (see his personal file, P.R.O., WO339/17067) and Second Lieutenant A. J. Annandale, 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, tried on the 1/2/16 for "Conduct to the prejudice of good order and Military Discipline (see his personal file, P.R.O., WO339/14160).

¹⁷On the issue of paternalism in the British army pre-1914, and particularly in the Irish regiments, see E. A. Muenger, *The British Military Dilemma in Ireland, Occupation Politics, 1886-1914*, University Press of Kansas and Gill and Mac Millan, Dublin, 1991, pp.19-21. For paternalism in the British Army as a whole during 1914-18 see G. D. Sheffield, "Officer-Man Relations, Discipline and Morale in the British Army of the Great War" in H. Cecil and P. H. Liddle (eds.) *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, Leo Cooper Ltd., London, 1996, pp.413-424.

It is unclear, from existent transcripts, who carried out the prosecution at a court martial. P.H. Winfield noted that the prosecutor at District Courts Martial was usually the adjutant of the accused's unit, while, in more complicated cases and at General Courts Martial, trained lawyers attached to G.H.Q. usually carried out this task.¹⁸ A defence was, at least at Field General Courts Martial, rarely put forward with much vigour. The sole defence, if it can even be called such, put forward by Rifleman J. Templeton 15th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, when tried on 26th. February 1916 was; "I am sorry for what I have done,"¹⁹ and, unfortunately this was fairly typical. Few soldiers were represented at courts martial by a "soldier's friend" (i.e. defence counsel); a random sample of thirty-two cases demonstrates that only three of the accused were afforded any legal representation at their trials.

There is no consistent pattern in the cases of these soldiers, who were represented at their trial Rifleman A. E. Allsop served with the 12th. Battalion, King's Royal Rifle Corps and was tried for desertion on the 31st. May 1917; Private G. Ainley of the 1/4th. Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry was charged with three counts of desertion on the 13th. July 1918; and Private J. Mitchell of the 1st. Battalion, British West Indies Regiment was tried for murder, manslaughter and an offence against an inhabitant (i.e. rape) on the 15th. December 1917.²⁰ The only obvious point to be made is that these cases all took place in the last two years of the war, when some public concern had been voiced against the courts martial system.

One of the most damning criticisms of the courts martial system was voiced by the Darling Report over the "prisoner's friend" issue, which remarked; "Evidence has been

¹⁸P. H. Winfield, "Courts Martial from the Lawyer's Point of View", *Law Quarterly Review*, 1918, p.148.

¹⁹Transcript of the court martial of Rifleman J. Templeton, P.R.O., WO71/454.

²⁰All details from P.R.O., WO93/49.

given before us to the effect that, in some instances, superior authorities have actively discouraged officers from appearing on behalf of accused persons.”²¹

With regard to Irish units, it is rather unclear how well the prisoner’s friend system worked. Lieutenant Percy McElwaine of the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, who had served as a barrister in both Ireland and Canada before the war, believed that he was transferred as he successfully defended three men. He stated;

These last three acquittals seem to have annoyed Divisional Headquarters who, realising that any man was entitled to have as prisoners friend any junior officer he might name - if available - ordered me to go to Amiens as Divisional Purchasing Officer. As Amiens was 30 or 40 miles from the Division I was no longer available. The excuse for sending me was that I had a knowledge of French.²²

It should be noted, however, that the role of a prisoner’s friend in courts martial was not exactly analogous to that of a defence counsel in a civil trial. While a defence lawyer would always seek to have his client found not guilty, or, if clearly guilty of a crime, to be sentenced to the most lenient sentence possible, this was not the case with reference to the role of prisoner’s friend. This difference is shown very clearly in the writings of Captain E. A. Godson of the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers. On the 17th. December 1916, Godson noted that he was;

Busy looking into the defence of Private Edgar who is charged with ‘desertion’ & looks as if he will suffer the extreme penalty. This is a stigma for

²¹Darling Report, p.7.

²² Sir Percy McElwaine papers, I.W.M., 92/35/1, p.81.

the Batt[alio]n. & if possible to be avoided. On looking into the case it strikes one as being very pathetic as he gave a false age on enlistment in order to be able to join up & is now only 18½ & has been in the Army 2 years. He got a dose of gonorrhoea in Ireland & it has weakened him physically & morally. On the night before he fell out of the ranks on the way up to the trenches he undoubtedly was done up & did not realize what his action would bring him in for. If he were 12 years older his action would be unpardonable but I think it will be hard for the youngster to be shot.²³

Godson felt that the court martial of Edgar was carried out fairly.²⁴ However, he was disappointed by the outcome stating; "P[ri]vate. Edgar's sentence was published today - 6 months imprisonment, this is too light, not good for the B[attalio]n. but it is something of a personal triumph."²⁵

However, Pugsley, in his study of courts martial held on New Zealand troops concedes that more legal support was given to the accused than is generally recorded; "Soldiers faced serious charges, ignorant of their position and usually totally unaware of procedure. They were completely dependent on the ability of their officers to speak on their behalf. A "soldier's friend" was always appointed to represent the soldier at each court martial, but the transcripts are evidence that it was rare for this officer to play any part in the proceedings."²⁶

This situation, of inadequate legal representation, did not persist in the case of either officers or spies tried by courts martial. The trial of spies was, naturally, a sensitive issue, especially as so many of them claimed to be citizens of neutral states. Indeed, of the

²³Entry for 17/12/16, Captain E. A. Godson diary, I.W.M., P.446.

²⁴Entries for 23/12/16 and 1/1/17, *ibid*.

²⁵Entry for 9/1/17, *ibid*.

²⁶C. Pugsley, On the Fringe of Hell, New Zealanders and Military Discipline in the First World War, Hodder & Stoughton, Auckland, 1991, pp.63-64.

twenty-eight spies tried by General Courts Martial in Britain during the First World War; four claimed to be Swedish, four Dutch, one Brazilian, three citizens of the United States of America, two Danish, one Peruvian, one Spanish, three Swiss, one Norwegian, one Belgian and only four German.²⁷ With the eyes of the international community focused on these trials, many of the rough and ready methods of a court martial were dispensed with. For example, when Carl Hans Lody was tried by a General Court Martial the trial lasted for three days (the 30th. and 31st. October and 2nd. November 1914) and the court consisted of eight eminent officers, viz.; two full colonels, four lieutenant colonels and two majors. The prosecutor was, officially, Lieutenant Colonel S. H. Godman, 3rd. Battalion, Scots Guards, but the prosecution was actually carried out by two civilian lawyers; Mr. A. H. Bodkin and Mr. Gattic, instructed by the Director of Public Prosecutions. The defence case was advanced by Mr. George Elliott, K.C. and Mr. Rowland Harker. Finally, the case was heard in the very unmilitary surroundings of the Guildhall, London.²⁸ Thus the trial of spies was carried out in an atmosphere which resembled a civilian court much more closely than a typical court martial and as such the accused was always provided with a defence counsel. However, while superficially it may appear that a German spy was better represented at a court martial than the average British soldier, we should perhaps reflect that, in time of war, the trial of spies often served as show trials. The result was rarely in any doubt and the elaborate provision of defence counsel merely served to show Britain's adherence to international law.

Two cases serve to illustrate the degree to which officers were represented at courts martial. Second Lieutenant John Henry Paterson of the 1st. Battalion, Essex Regiment was tried by a General Court Martial at Boulogne on the 11th. September 1918, charged with desertion while on active service, the murder of Detective Sergeant H. A.

²⁷P.R.O., WO93/49, p.104.

²⁸All details from the transcript of the court martial of Carl Hans Lody, WO71/1236.

Collinson, Military Foot Police, and five charges of forgery. He was represented by Lieutenant E. P. Walsh, Barrister at Law. However, the presence of a trained defence counsel did little to help Paterson's case, as he was found guilty of the first two charges and executed. The cross-examination of witnesses by Walsh was desperately ineffective and, indeed, possibly did some damage to Paterson's case when it was revealed that, far from being inexperienced in noting details correctly, Lance Corporal W. Stockton, Military Foot Police, the main prosecution witness for the murder charge, had been a railway detective in civilian life!²⁹

The case of Sub-Lieutenant Edwin Dyett, Royal Navy is a peculiar one, if only because he was tried by Field General Court Martial, when officers should only have been tried by General Courts Martial.³⁰ Dyett was defended by Sub-Lieutenant Cecil Cameron Trevanion, Hawke Battalion, Royal Naval Division, who, in peace time, was a solicitor. If Second Lieutenant Paterson had been badly represented at his General Court Martial, Dyett, being charged with remaining absent from his battalion in the field on the 13th. November 1916 and conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline in that he did not go up to the front line when ordered to do so, was appallingly defended. Indeed, Leonard Sellers believes that the testimony of Acting Petty Officer H. C. Aimes, under cross examination by Trevanion that the; "Accused did not look as if he was afraid or in a funk. He looked as if he wanted to get out of it,"³¹ was probably the remark that secured Dyett's execution, coming, as it did, from a junior rank.

This issue, of the representation of the accused, does bring into question the much wider issue of how much officers and other ranks actually understood about military law. To deal with the officers first, it is quite clear that many, even quite senior officers,

²⁹All details from transcript of the court martial of Second Lieutenant J. H. Patterson, P.R.O., WO71/1028.

³⁰Dyett was not alone in this see, P.R.O., WO213/1-28 for examples.

³¹Cited in L. Sellers, *For God's Sake Shoot Straight*, p.43.

understood little about military law. For example, Major General Powell, the commanding officer of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, frequently held Field General Courts Martial in his division when it was based in Britain (these were only to be held overseas).³² Major Bullen-Smith, President of the court at the trial of Private Thomas Hope, 2nd. Battalion, Leinster Regiment was clearly acting in a conflict of interests, as he was also the accused's C.O..³³ Finally, many officers tried men with several charges that were very similar and vast numbers of officers who sat on courts martial resulted in the sentence being quashed, simply as the officers who sat on them did not have an adequate amount of commissioned service to legally be a member of the court.³⁴

Ignorance of military law was not purely limited to temporary officers or those serving in New Army or Territorial Force units. Major-General J. F. C. Fuller, while at Sandhurst in the period before the First World War recalled that; "Military Law was a jest. Once a week for two hours at a stretch we sat in the classroom and read the Manual (of Military Law) and when we had exhausted those sections dealing with murder, rape and indecency, we either destroyed Her Majesty's property with our penknives or twiddled our thumbs."³⁵ One would have thought that the influx of legally qualified men into the officer corps following the outbreak of war would have helped to remedy this situation, however, as P. H. Winfield noted;

the lawyer-officer has the advantage of a professional training which enables him to seize a point quickly, to understand and to apply the rules of

³²See P.R.O., WO81/144, p.504 for a letter dated 22nd. April 1915, from the Judge Advocate General to the Commanding Officer, 36th. Division, relating to the cases of Privates J. Hoey, W. Jordan, J. Burns and J. Love, 9th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, who were all tried by Field General Courts Martial.

³³See transcript of the court martial of Private T. Hope, P.R.O., WO213/401.

³⁴See District Court Martial ledger, P.R.O., WO83/26 for examples.

³⁵Cited in G. R. Rubin, "The Legal Education of British Army Officers, 1860-1923", *Journal of Legal History*, vol.15, no.3, 1994, p.228.

evidence and correctly to weigh evidence given at the trial. To that extent he is better equipped than an officer without such technical education. But when this much has been granted, it is not so easy to see what, if any, superiority he has over an officer of the old regular army. Not many lawyers before they receive their commissions know much of military law.³⁶

The point must also be made that no exceptions were made to the established system of selection for service on courts martial during the war and a legally qualified officer, like his unqualified counterpart, had to possess between one (for a Regimental Court Martial) and three (for a General Court Martial) years commissioned service before he could serve as a member of a court martial.

If a relatively large number of officers were deficient in their knowledge of military law, most other ranks knew virtually nothing about it. The 908 page Manual of Military Law is not exactly designed for the layman and most of it, if ever actually seen, by the typical pre-1914 regular army recruit must have been largely incomprehensible, given his educational background. Indeed, the employment backgrounds of pre-1914 recruits suggests that some were barely literate, as D. Fitzpatrick notes;

Irish recruits, like their British counterparts, were typically unemployed lads in their late 'teens for whom the risks entailed by soldiery (casual violence, venereal disease, oppressive discipline, active service) were outweighed by its benefits (long-term employment, bed and board, camaraderie, adventure). In 1909, less than one recruit in ten had a job at the time of enlistment; and the attestation of 'corner boys' or loungers was notoriously brisk in the vicinity of

³⁶P. H. Winfield, "Courts-Martial from the Lawyer's Point of View", Law Quarterly Review, 1918, p.146.

public houses. Between 1905 and 1913, half of the recruits accepted in Ireland thought of themselves as unskilled urban workers such as porters, carters, servants or casual labourers. One-sixth were skilled workers, while the proportion with professional or clerical experience was negligible.³⁷

These employment backgrounds suggest that most pre-war regulars were poorly educated; indeed J. Fuller notes that between 1907 and 1913 seventy percent of British recruits had been unable to pass the educational standards set for eleven year old children.³⁸ When this is compared with the intricacies of British military law, it is not surprising that so few regular soldiers put up a reasonable defence at courts martial. Private B. O'Connell of the 1st. Battalion, Irish Guards, who, while he enlisted in 1916 would appear to be similar to a pre-1914 recruit, evidently bewildered by the whole experience of being court martialled simply stated; "I can't read or write except my name. I did not realise it was a serious offence to leave the company nor that I would be punished. I left to find a woman in one of the villages. I intended to return to the battalion."³⁹ One would expect soldiers of Kitchener and Territorial Force units, with their much more varied educational and social backgrounds, to be capable of offering more convincing defence cases at courts martial, but this rarely seems to be the case. However, in this context, it is worth considering Lieutenant Colonel H. M. Meyler's evidence, given before the Committee Appointed to Consider Proposed Amendments to the Army Act, which sat in 1924, in which he stated; "The argument that I shall develop is that it is the uneducated and stupid soldiers only who get arrested after desertion whilst

³⁷D. Fitzpatrick, "A Militarised Society, 1900-22", in T. Bartlett and K. Jeffery (eds.) *A Military History of Ireland*, C.U.P., 1996, p.381.

³⁸J. G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990, p.47.

³⁹Transcript of the court martial of Private B. O'Connell, P.R.O., WO71/659.

the more clever ones get clear away and do not return until a war is over."⁴⁰ It is, of course, impossible to verify this statement; while some men tried by courts martial were clearly educationally backward, it may have been the case that soldiers did not want to question authority by defending themselves, believing, instead that the paternalism of the army would protect them.

Lastly, on this issue, we should recognise that in civilian courts in this period few working class people would have offered a convincing defence case, especially if being tried in a magistrates court for a crime such as drunk and disorderly; where the evidence of a police officer would almost invariably be believed rather than their own. Equally, few working class or lower middle class defendants could afford legal representation in court. The 1903 Poor Prisoner's Defence Act did make some tentative moves towards providing what we would recognise today as legal aid, however, as A. H. Manchester notes of this Act;

either the magistrates who were committing an accused person for trial, or the judge before the hearing of the trial, might certify for legal aid. Thereupon solicitor and counsel might be assigned at public expense. Yet there were serious draw-backs. In particular the Act limited legal aid to those prisoners who had discarded their defences, nor did the Act provide for legal aid before committal.⁴¹

Therefore, as far as the legal education of other ranks is concerned, this was virtually non-existent. However, having said this, we should recognise that many working class people would have been equally bewildered if tried by a civil court. Indeed, P. H.

⁴⁰P.R.O., WO93/49, p.45.

⁴¹A. H. Manchester, A Modern Legal History of England and Wales, 1750-1950, Butterworths, London, 1980, p.100.

Winfield suggested that courts martial were, in many ways, more favourable to those without any legal knowledge, than civil courts, commenting that;

the court does not relish attempts on the part of the prosecutor to get a conviction at all costs. Courts martial, in practice as well as in theory, go further than this, and many a question which would be unexceptional if asked by the prosecutor at any assize or quarter-sessions court may incur a disapproval at a court martial which is none the less damaging to the prosecutor because it is silent; he may hear nothing of it till the trial is over and even then only by indirect channels.⁴²

So far, some elements of how courts martial were conducted; namely how the court was comprised and the legal knowledge of officers and other ranks in relation to how effectively they offered their defence, have been considered. Some attention must also be paid to the issues of witnesses at courts martial, where courts martial were held and the issue of officers acting as judges.

The number of witnesses attending courts martial was never very large. In Second-Lieutenant J. H. Paterson's General Court Martial, twelve witnesses appeared (ten for the prosecution and two for the defence)⁴³ while, more typically, at Private James Cassidy's Field General Court Martial, four witnesses, all for the prosecution appeared.⁴⁴ These small numbers can be accounted for by the fact that where, for example, a man had deserted from his unit before a major action and had been absent for a number of months, few men from his unit would remember him by the time he was apprehended. Indeed at

⁴²P. H. Winfield, "Courts martial from a lawyer's point of view", p.148.

⁴³Transcript of the court martial of Second Lieutenant J. H. Patterson, P.R.O., WO71/1028.

⁴⁴Transcript of the court martial of Private J. Cassidy, P.R.O., WO71/484.

Cassidy's trial, Private T. Connolly, 1st. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers was called as the first prosecution witness and after testifying that Cassidy had deserted between nine and eleven in the morning of the 23rd, June 1916, mournfully stated; "I am the only man left in the platoon."⁴⁵

The small number of witnesses was not a serious problem in most cases, but, at least in the case of one Irish soldier, a number of key witnesses were not present at his trial. Lance-Corporal Peter Sands, 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, was tried on the 30th. August 1915 for, when on active service, deserting His Majesty's service and losing government property; a bicycle worth £7 10s 0d. Unlike most regular soldiers, Sands offered a coherent and, in the circumstances of early 1915, almost believable, defence. He claimed that on leave in Belfast he lost his travel warrant and when he went to the depot to obtain a new one the Corporal on duty denied all responsibility for Sands. Sands then stated; "I then went away. Had I decided to desert I would have worn plain clothes, but up to the time I was arrested I always wore uniform."⁴⁶ Crucially, no officer or other rank (Sands identified the N.C.O. who had sent him away from the depot as Corporal Wright) from the Royal Irish Rifles depot appeared at the Field General Courts Martial, neither did Constable J. W. Clarke of the Royal Irish Constabulary, who had arrested Sands. While it is perhaps understandable that witnesses, especially a police officer, could not be expected to travel to a war zone it should be noted that Sands could have been tried in the United Kingdom and that the court did not even write to the depot to clarify the situation. Therefore, in at least one Field General Court Martial involving Irish troops, the number of witnesses present was clearly insufficient.

Another allegation made against the convening of Field General Courts Martial by Anthony Babington is that they were held in cramped rooms in estiments, so that no

⁴⁵ibid.

⁴⁶Transcript of the court martial of Lance Corporal P. Sands, P.R.O., WO71/432.

members of the public could attend.⁴⁷ Rather bizarrely, the only definitive example of closed courts which has been discovered relates to Field General Courts Martial held in the United Kingdom, namely those held in Dublin following the 1916 Easter Rising and, even here, there is some doubt. The Judge Advocate General writing on the issue noted;

In the first place enquiry should be made whether any order for exclusion of the public was in fact made, or any member of the public seeking admittance in fact excluded,..., F.G.C.M. can therefore only be held in the U.K. at all in the event of invasion or armed rebellion normally they are held in a country beyond the seas, and it is impossible to apply to them the ordinary rules as to admission of the public. In these cases the public would mean foreigners, enemies or rebels,..., The justification for holding the trials in question *in camera* was that the rebellion was in progress, that the safety of the court and witnesses would have been endangered, and that information might have reached the enemy and the rebels which it was desirable in the public interest that they should not possess.⁴⁸

However, on this point, it should be noted that few venues where Field General Courts Martial were held could have been less luxurious or well equipped than some civil courts, for example the Petty Sessions Court in the Old Market house, Ballycastle, County Antrim.⁴⁹ Equally, C. P. Crane, who was a Resident Magistrate in County Sligo before the war, noted the variety of surroundings in which courts were held;

⁴⁷A. Babington, *For the Sake of Example*, p.14.

⁴⁸Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/26, pp.509-13.

⁴⁹This building has been rebuilt at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra, County Down.

The courts in which all this 'amusement' occurred varied in size and dignity, from the somewhat pretentious, Corinthian-pillared edifice guarded by two guns captured at Sebastopol, which graced the county town, where assizes, quarter sessions and petty sessions were held, to the little whitewashed, thatched cabin in the remote country district, with its mud floor and bare rafters, and, in winter weather, its pungent smell of turf smoke mingled with wet frieze.⁵⁰

Another allegation made against the courts martial system was that the officers trying the case understood very little about the accused's circumstances. In this context, one enduring myth, that it was mostly staff officers who sat on courts martial, should be laid to rest. Certainly, as the war progressed, special court martial officers were attached to G.H.Q. and would attend courts martial as Judge Advocates. However, the numbers of such officers was never large, during the Great War Judge Advocates were present at just 326 courts martial and, even these legally qualified officers could make mistakes as five of the sentences passed by these courts were later quashed, one partially quashed and one partially not confirmed.⁵¹ Equally, the role of Judge Advocate was to advise other members of the court, not to sit in judgement or to act for the prosecution and the members of the court were, certainly in the case of Field General Courts Martial, front-line infantry officers. These men clearly had a good understanding of the privations which men suffered in the trenches, but at the same time a yawning class difference between officers and other ranks remained, to a large extent, throughout the Great War. Again, on this point, it is worth considering the civilian comparisons. In 1906 the property qualification for Justices of the Peace was removed, as T. Skyrme notes;

⁵⁰C. P. Crane, Memories of a Resident Magistrate, 1880-1920, T&A Constable Ltd., The University Press, Edinburgh, 1938, p.195.

⁵¹P.R.O., WO93/49, p.47.

this change finally broke the link between the magistracy and the landed gentry. Even before the Royal Commission (of 1909) the county benches had become less exclusive, and after 1911 they began to include numbers of individuals who were unconnected with landed property and who were also drawn more evenly from the two political parties. On the other hand there was little sign on county benches of the working-class men whom the Royal Commission wished to see appointed. This was not because of any deliberate policy on the part of the committees to exclude the working class. It was due partly to a tendency of the committees to choose persons who occupied prominent positions in public life and whose capability could be judged by their performance in other fields, but the principal reason was that it proved to be far more difficult than had been expected to find members of working-class men, and later women, who were both suitable for appointment and also able and willing to serve.⁵²

It should also be noted that trial by jury was not common in Edwardian civil courts. By 1900, less than one-eighth of trials in Ireland were by jury.⁵³ Johnson further noted that jury trial; “was supposed to represent judgement by one’s peers, although, in nineteenth century Britain, given the property qualification for jurors, there was frequently a wide social gulf between those in the jury box and those in the dock.”⁵⁴

Therefore, in a civil court, the working-class accused would normally face a class difference between himself and a magistrate or judge which would often be as great as that between a soldier and officer at a court martial. Equally, as D. Philips points out

⁵²T. Skyrme, *History of the Justices of the Peace*, Barry Rose Publishers, Chichester, 1994, p.686.

⁵³D. Johnson, “Trial by Jury in Ireland, 1860-1914”, *Legal History*, vol.17, no.3, 1996, p.271.

⁵⁴*ibid*, p.289.

many of the “new type” of J.P.s who had emerged from the mid-nineteenth century, in the Midlands were industrialists and factory owners, who frequently tried their own employees at quarter or petty sessions for work related crimes.⁵⁵ An officer, as a member of a court martial, trying a soldier from his own unit, was at least as impartial in his judgement as these civilian magistrates.

Another allegation frequently made against the courts martial system is that the trials were over in a very short period of time. Indeed, most trials seem to have been conducted in about one hour or less. Captain W. A. Montgomery noted in a letter of January 1917, that four Field General Courts Martial cases on which he had sat were completed in two and a half hours.⁵⁶ Equally, Major Walter Guinness of the 11th. Battalion, Cheshire Regiment, remembered presiding over a court martial (presumably a Field General Court Martial) which tried five cases on 18th. September 1916.⁵⁷ Of course, some court martial cases would be relatively cut and dried, for example cases of drunkenness, whereas we would expect cases involving capital offences to have been given more consideration. Again, a comparison with civil courts can be made, as Clive Emsley notes; “During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century most criminal trials were over in a matter of minutes, they rarely seem to have taken as long as an hour.”⁵⁸ Further, Emsley makes the point that from the mid-nineteenth century civil trials had taken more time as juries then retired to consider their verdict, rather than grouping in a huddle in the middle of the court room. As courts martial did not consist of juries, the military practice in this, as in so many other issues, is not completely detached from the civilian precedent.

⁵⁵D. Philips, Crime and Authority in Victorian England: The Black Country, 1835-1860, Croom Helm, London, 1977.

⁵⁶Letter, Montgomery to his parents, 30/1/17, P.R.O.N.I., D.2794/1/1/21.

⁵⁷B. Bond and S. Robbins (eds.) Staff Officer: The Diaries of Walter Guinness (First Lord Moyne) 1914-18, Leo Cooper, London, 1987, p.117.

⁵⁸C. Emsley, Crime and Society in England, 1750-1900, Longman, London, 1987, p.153.

The sample of courts martial examined has shown that a number of serious legal mistakes were made; of which the conflict of interest shown by Major Bullen-Smith in Private Thomas Hope's trial, the lack of crucial defence witnesses at Private Sands trial and the lack of 'prisoners' friends' have already been discussed. The failure to examine men tried by courts martial in relation to serious crimes for shell shock was another serious flaw in the courts martial system. Babington comments that; "It was most unusual in the early stages of the war for a soldier under sentence of death to be examined by a doctor."⁵⁹ While this was the case, by 1916 medical boards frequently examined men being tried by Field General Courts Martial. In the case of Private J. Carey, 8th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, tried on 21st. August 1916 for desertion, the accused stated; "I lose my head in the trenches at times and I do not know what I am doing at all. My family is afflicted the same way. My father committed suicide over it. My brother's death in the Phoenix Park, five years ago on 17th. March 1911 was due to the same thing."⁶⁰ This resulted in an eminent medical board consisting of Colonel A. Brennan, Assistant Director of Medical Services, 16th. (Irish) Division (President), Major G. F. Sheehan, R.A.M.C. and Captain George Buchanan, R.A.M.C. examining the accused. They concluded that Carey was; "of sound mind at the present time and there is no evidence to suppose that he was insane on the 15th. June 1916."⁶¹

However, Private James Cassidy of the 1st. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, who was tried on 28th. June 1916 claimed that after a shell landed beside him and covered him in clay; "I got nerve shock and proceeded down the trenches,"⁶² was not examined by a doctor. This was probably because, being apprehended in Belfast, Ireland, his crime was clearly deliberate involving as it did, two sea crossings and three rail connections,

⁵⁹Babington, *For the Sake of Example*, p.25.

⁶⁰Transcript of the court martial of Private J. Carey, P.R.O., WO71/500.

⁶¹ibid.

⁶²Transcript of the court martial of Private J. Cassidy, P.R.O., WO71/484.

which could hardly have been made by a man in a dazed state of shell shock. It is also clear that, later in the war, many men, like Cassidy, used the term shell-shock as an excuse for their actions. Nevertheless, the failure to have all men carefully examined by medical authorities in such cases was a major failing of the courts martial process.

A number of other problems arose at courts martial, which generally saw the sentence passed quashed. One has only to examine any of the Judge Advocate General's minute books⁶³ to find courts wrongly constituted, mainly as members of the court did not hold sufficient commissioned service to be sitting in judgement. Equally, the sentences against Privates J. Doyle and J. Dunne of the 6th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers and Private F. Lahiff, 7th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers were quashed as;

a Captain of the 6th. B[attalion]n., Royal Dublin Fusiliers and a Lieutenant of the 7th. B[attalion]n., Royal Munster Fusiliers served on the court in each case in place of a Captain of the 6th. B[attalion]n., Royal Munster Fusiliers and a Captain of the 7th. B[attalion]n. Royal Munster Fusiliers as appointed by the Convening Order; and the Courts therefore had no jurisdiction.⁶⁴

Another problem was with wrongly completed paperwork. The case of Private F. Dillon is an extreme, if not untypical example, the Judge Advocate General's Office noting;

With reference to your letter of the 23rd. inst., I am directed by the Judge Advocate General to return the proceedings in the case of Pte. Francis Dillon, 6th. (S.[ervice]) B[attalion]n., Connaught Rangers, and to point out that;

⁶³A good example is P. R. O., WO83/23.

⁶⁴Judge Advocate General's letter book, P.R.O., WO83/20, p.246.

- 1) The attestation forms of the accused ought to have been attached to the proceedings.
- 2) The accused confesses to having fraudulently enlisted on December 23rd. whereas the first charge on the sheet alleges Dec. 21st. as the date of such enlistment.
- 3) The second charge upon the second charge sheet should not have been proffered (See note 5 to section 10 of the Army Act).
- 4) There is no evidence in the summary with reference to the surrender of the accused to the military authorities on February 1st.
- 5) There is no certificate on P.1 as required by the notes on P.679 of the M[annual of] M[military] L[aw].⁶⁵

Admittedly these examples are taken from units based in the United Kingdom, but it should be noted that within six months of these errors occurring these units were all on active service. Taken together this catalogue of mistakes demonstrates that many officers, especially in New Army units, were almost completely unfamiliar with the intricacies of courts martial proceedings. Writing on his own legal training, Captain Montgomery, a New Army officer in the 36th. (Ulster) Division noted;

I have had to make up a lot of law, both military and civil and also, of course get a real good practical working knowledge of the rules of evidence. It is like everything else, I have had to pick it up by doing it in real earnest. No fancy courses or other luxury of that kind - just go and do it and may the Lord have mercy on you if you make a mess of it. I have been lucky enough up to

⁶⁵Judge Advocate General's letter book, P.R.O., WO81/144, p.47, entry for 26/2/15.

now. I haven't even had a case returned to me. It is largely a matter of luck however.⁶⁶

This lack of knowledge and resulting ineptitude led to a great deal of time lost, as the Judge Advocate General's office had little hesitation in quashing cases where the proper procedure had not been followed.

Having now considered the courts martial system and some of the problems experienced in administering it during the Great War, it is important to consider the second stage of the process in capital cases; the comments attached to courts martial hearings by commanding officers. Before considering this situation the point must be re-iterated that, with a few exceptions, only the case transcripts for men actually executed were available for inspection, and one must concede that those available are therefore almost totally unrepresentative.

As a general rule, it would be safe to concede that soldiers who received wholly complimentary comments from their commanding officers were almost always reprieved. Indeed, C.O.s were very reluctant to send a man clearly guilty of desertion for court martial. John Lucy, who at the time was working in the orderly room of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, remembered that the battalion's adjutant, who was collecting evidence against a deserter, connived to have the man found insane. This was as much out of a desire to maintain the good reputation of the battalion, as out of a concern for this deserter!⁶⁷

Likewise Lieutenant Colonel Denys Reitz was relieved when two privates came to see him to confirm that a suspected deserter in the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles had actually been in hospital during the period he was missing from his battalion. Reitz, who

⁶⁶Letter from Montgomery to his parents, 30th. January 1917, P.R.O.N.I., D.2794/1/1/21.

⁶⁷J. F. Lucy, There's a Devil in the Drum, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1938, pp.295-6.

was preparing the case against this soldier to transmit to brigade, simply tore up the casenotes!⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the C.O.'s comments still merit attention for two important reasons. Firstly, to consider to what extent men were executed 'for the sake of example', rather than out of any real sense of justice, and; secondly, to consider how well the system designed for a small, professional army, coped with the mass armies of 1914-18. Equally Pugsley has raised this as an issue by stating of these commanding officers' comments; "Such submissions were mandatory for each death sentence. They could save or condemn the accused based on the judgement of the commanding officer and whoever he chose to consult. This proved to be a trial after the trial, but one where the odds were stacked against the defendant."⁶⁹

Clearly numbers of men were executed largely due to disciplinary problems in their unit. However, having said this, commanding officers' comments on their characters and their number of previous convictions must also have influenced the decision as to whether they were executed or not. For example, if we take the case of Private T. Murphy, 2nd. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, tried on the 30th. April 1917 for desertion. Brigadier-General L. J. Ashburger, 96th. Infantry Brigade noted;

The state of discipline in the Battalion is at present bad. There have been six convictions for desertion since 1st. April last,.., I strongly recommend the sentence of the Court be put into execution. At the time Private Murphy desertion it appeared probable that the Brigade would shortly be engaged. This combined with the prevalence of this particular offence in this battalion during the period the Brigade was engaged in arduous operations, under the most

⁶⁸D. Reitz, *Trekking On*, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1933, pp.183-4.

⁶⁹Pugsley, *On the Fringe of Hell*, p.128.

inclement weather conditions, makes it essential, if discipline is to be upheld, to make an example of this man.⁷⁰

Clearly this illustrates that Ashburger felt that an exemplary case was needed to reinforce discipline in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. However, it is impossible to discover whether it was this factor that led to Murphy's execution or other circumstances, namely that he was clearly guilty of desertion and had eight previous military offences, including; breaking out of his billet, hesitating to obey an N.C.O.s order, and being absent from his billet for five days. It should be stressed that Murphy was not unique in having previous offences, of the twenty one Irish cases examined in depth; twelve had at least one previous offence. Equally, many of these men had a string of serious military offences before them; for example Rifleman J. Templeton, 15th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, tried for desertion on the 26th. February 1916 had five previous offences, viz; 1) 27/12/15, Absent from parade. Seven days field punishment number one awarded by commanding officer. 2) 20/1/16, Disobeying an N.C.O.'s order. 28 days field punishment number one awarded by commanding officer. 3) 29/1/16, Absent from working parade. 14 days field punishment number one awarded by commanding officer. 4) 18/2/16, Absent from parade. 28 days field punishment number one awarded by commanding officer. 5) 12/2/16, Absent from parade. Seven days field punishment number one awarded by commanding officer.⁷¹

Other soldiers had a smaller number of cases, although these were of a more serious nature. For example, Private J. Carey of the 8th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, tried on the 21st. August 1916 on two counts of desertion by Field General Court Martial had two previous offences, namely; 1)18/8/16, At Southampton. Absent when under

⁷⁰Transcript of the court martial of Private T. Murphy, P.R.O., WO71/557.

⁷¹All details from transcript of the court martial of Rifleman J. Templeton, P.R.O., WO71/454.

orders for active service. 14 days detention awarded by commanding officer. 2) 4/5/16, Desertion; found guilty of being absent without leave. 90 days field punishment one, awarded by Field General Court Martial.⁷²

The most extreme example of previous offences encountered in this sample was in the case of Private W. Hanna of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, tried for desertion on 16th. October 1917. He had two previous offences; firstly there was a charge of desertion tried by Field General Court Martial on 9th. August 1915. Hanna was sentenced to death on this charge, but had his sentence commuted to ten years penal servitude by Lieutenant General Sir Brian Mahon, G.O.C., 10th. (Irish) Division. This sentence was suspended. Secondly, Hanna was tried on the 29th. August 1917 for breaking out of camp. He was sentenced, probably by his C.O., to 14 days field punishment number one.⁷³

It should be stressed at this point that the element of *pour les encouragements de les autres* was not present in all these capital cases. For example, in the case of Rifleman S. McBride of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, tried for desertion on the 25th. November 1916, Major H. P. Goodman, commanding officer of the battalion stated; "I can find no reason why the extreme penalty should not be inflicted in this case beyond that, in the interests of the Battalion's discipline, I do not consider an example necessary."⁷⁴ Brigadier-General Bitthill, 74th. Infantry Brigade, echoed this, noting; "I am of opinion that the crime was deliberately committed,..., and that there is no reason why the extreme penalty should not be inflicted. I took over command of this B[rigade] on October 16th., 1916, I am quite satisfied with the state of discipline in the regiment."⁷⁵

⁷²Transcript of the court martial of Private J. Carey, P.R.O., WO71/500.

⁷³Transcript of the court martial of Private W. Hanna, P.R.O., WO71/611.

⁷⁴Transcript of the court martial of Rifleman S. Mc Bride, P.R.O., Kew, WO71/529.

⁷⁵ibid.

Sometimes, it appears that officers felt that men should be executed, not to provide examples, but as they were "bad" soldiers. Major William B. Ewart, Commanding Officer of the 15th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, noted of Rifleman J. Templeton of his unit, tried on 26th. February 1916 for desertion;

1) This man's character is poor, indeed, and his general conduct is always open to complaint, he is naturally of a stubborn disposition and requires a great deal of his attention, for some reason this only applies to his case for the past 3 months, his offences previously were of a minor nature.

He came to France with the Unit on 4th. October 1915.

2) He no doubt left the Front Line deliberately but doubtless looked at his action as any of his previous ones and did not realise how serious an offence he was committing, no case of this nature having previously occurred in the Battalion or within the knowledge of the men.

3) While in the Trenches I cannot speak highly of this man's character and have no experience of him as a fighter, so could form no definite opinion.⁷⁶

Some officers in service battalions appear to have felt that exemplary executions were needed, not because of indiscipline in their unit, but as wartime volunteers needed to be shown the power of military law. This is particularly clear in Lieutenant-Colonel F. P. Crozier's comments on Private James Crozier (no relation), 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, sentenced to death for desertion in February 1916. Again this commanding officer also picked up on the individual concerned being a "bad" soldier;

⁷⁶Transcript of the court martial of Rifleman J. Templeton, P.R.O., WO71/454.

1) From a fighting point of view this soldier is of no value - His behaviour has been that of a 'shirker' for the past 3 months. He has been with the Exped.[itionary] Force since 3/10/15.

2) I am firmly of opinion that the crime was deliberately committed with the intention of avoiding duty in the Redan, more particularly as he absented himself shortly after the case of another soldier had been promulgated for a similar crime. The officer commanding the man's company is of the same opinion. Sentence was remitted in the case mentioned; to 2yrs. H[ard] L[abour].⁷⁷

Brigadier-General Wittycombe, General Officer Commanding 107th. Infantry Brigade, made it clear that an example was not needed in Crozier's battalion, stating; "The discipline of the 9th. R.[oyal] I.[rish] Rifles is good for a service Battalion."⁷⁸

A key element of British military law was that an officer should be able to give a reference relating to any soldier under his command. In the early months of the war, officers in regular units were able to do this. For example, Major J. F. Frefusis, 1st. Battalion, Irish Guards, was able to remark of Private A. Smyth, sentenced to death for desertion on the 19th. January 1915; "I have known this man all his service (Smythe had enlisted in 1909) personally."⁷⁹ However, by 1916 this system had broken down in regular army units due to the high casualty rates amongst both officers and other ranks. In the case of Private S. Mc Bride, 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, it would appear that both his conduct sheet and officers who knew him were unavailable, leaving Sergeant Kelly to recall on oath; "I have known the accused since February 1916. He has been in

⁷⁷Transcript of the court martial of Rifleman J. Crozier, P.R.O., WO71/450. See chapter five for a discussion of the impact of Templeton's and Crozier's executions on the 107th. Brigade.

⁷⁸Transcript of the court martial of Rifleman J. Crozier, P.R.O., WO71/450.

⁷⁹Transcript of the court martial of Private A. Smyth, , P.R.O., WO71/394.

my platoon since then. So far as [I] have known him he has always been a good, steady and willing soldier.”⁸⁰

In Kitchener units, this reference system survived until late 1916. When Private J. Carey, 8th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers was sentenced to death with a recommendation to mercy on grounds of defective intellect on 19th. September 1916 his commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart was able to state; “His character from a fighting point of view is quite useless,..., In my opinion the crime was deliberately committed to avoid going into the front line. He always had enough intelligence to find himself out of range of guns.”⁸¹ However, as early as March 1916 Major William B. Ewart felt himself unable to give an indication of Rifleman J. Templeton ‘from a fighting point of view’ and only supplied this under pressure from his superiors.⁸²

By 1917 it would appear that this system had basically collapsed. No notes whatsoever are provided on the characters of Privates J. Hepple, 1st. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (executed on 29th. June 1917), J. Wishart, 7th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (executed on 15th. June 1917) and M. Monaghan, 1st. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers (executed on 9th. November 1917).⁸³ Meanwhile, in the case of Private T. Murphy, 2nd. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, executed on 14th. May 1917, no officer below the rank of Brigadier-General commented on the case, and he only considered the state of discipline in the battalion, not Murphy’s character.⁸⁴ Thus, in the face of a rapid turnover of personnel, the old paternalism of the British regular army, so deeply embedded in the courts martial system through this referencing system, disappeared. This is further reinforced by the fact that, of the above soldiers, Privates

⁸⁰Transcript of the court martial of Rifleman S. Mc Bride, , P.R.O., WO71/529.

⁸¹Transcript of the court martial of Private J. Carey, P.R.O., WO71/500.

⁸²Transcript of the court martial of Rifleman J. Templeton, P.R.O., WO71/454.

⁸³The transcripts of these cases are, P.R.O., WO71/571, WO71/563, and WO71/613.

⁸⁴Transcript of the trial of Private T. Murphy, 2nd. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, P.R.O., Kew, WO71/557.

Hanna and Murphy were tried by Field General Courts Martial where none of the officers from their own battalion were members of the court.

However, the fact that the only two Irish soldiers to be executed by courts martial during the Great War who were represented by a "prisoner's friend" were tried in July 1918, might suggest that the old paternalism was still alive in some of the Irish units, namely, the 1st. Battalion, Irish Guards and 2nd. Battalion, Leinster Regiment,⁸⁵ albeit in a very different form. This we would expect in the Guards, which tried to maintain pre-war standards; but the fact that it occurred in the 2nd. Battalion, Leinster Regiment and, frankly, that the defence offered was totally ineffective, may suggest that the army was more concerned with appeasing public opinion in Ireland than the officers in the battalions concerned were in defending their own men.

Once a court martial had made its ruling, the case notes and officers' comments had to be sent to the Judge Advocate General's office. It has often been alleged that one of the greatest failings of the British courts martial system was that there was no appeals system. Strictly speaking, of course there was no appeals structure available to those found guilty by courts martial.⁸⁶ However, in a very real sense the Judge Advocate General's office did act as an appeal court. Large numbers of cases were either quashed or amended.⁸⁷ In some ways, the system was fairer than the civilian appeals procedure;

⁸⁵The soldiers so represented were Private B. O'Connell (see, P.R.O., WO71/659) and Private H. Hendricks (see P.R.O., WO71/661).

⁸⁶War Office, Manual of Military Law, p.120. In September 1918 a Mrs. Barff appealed to the Privy Council, in an attempt to have her husband's court martial verdict overturned. The Judge Advocate General's view was that, "In the event of any miscarriage of justice the only Appeal is by way of memorial to the Crown acting through the Secretary of State. It is the usual practice to refer the matter to the J.[udge] A.[dvocate] G.[eneral] and if need be to the Law Officers of the Crown for report, that no innocent man may suffer from error in the tribunal." (Letter, Judge Advocate General to the Secretary, Privy Council Office, 11/9/18, Judge Advocate General's letterbook, P.R.O., WO83/32).

⁸⁷For example, in the case of soldiers serving on the Western Front, in Irish regiments, of 5,645 tried by court martial between the arrival of their units in France and the Armistice, 1,917 (or 34%) had their sentence altered, in some way, following the submission of the

all courts martial cases were subject to scrutiny to insure that proper procedures had been followed. An interesting comparison with civil courts is that between 1909 and 1912 the Court of Criminal Appeal heard an average of only 450 applications to appeal and 170 actual appeals, per annum.⁸⁸

Equally, it should be noted that between 1914 and 1918 of the 97 people sentenced to death by civil courts in the United Kingdom, 40 were executed, 43 had their sentence commuted to penal servitude and only three had their convictions quashed by the Court of Criminal Appeal.⁸⁹ This compares very unfavourably to the situation in the B.E.F., where just 10.82% of men sentenced to death were actually executed.⁹⁰

The Judge Advocate General frequently made drastic changes to the rulings of courts martial. For example, Rifleman W. Robinson of the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, who was sentenced to death by a Field General Court Martial on 21st. May 1915, had this commuted to three months field punishment number one!⁹¹ Equally, a wide variety of sentences were simply quashed, presumably as there had been some irregularity in the procedure or composition of the court martial.

Of course, to date, it seems to have been suggested that the Judge Advocate General's office was the final arbiter in the courts martial process. This was not the legal position of the Judge Advocate General's office, which was responsible to civilian control through the Secretary of State for War and it was on this government minister's authority that cases were quashed or remitted. However, given the burden of work dealt with by Kitchener in the early years of the war, it would seem that Lord Haldane dealt with courts

case transcript to the Judge Advocate General. Of these cases, 161 were quashed. These figures have been calculated using the database contained in appendix 6.

⁸⁸W. R. Cornish, *Law and Society in England 1750-1950*, Sweet and Maxwell, London, 1989, p.620.

⁸⁹Figures compiled from, *Royal Commission on Capital Punishment, 1949-53 Report*, Cmd. 8932, H.M.S.O., London, 1953, pp.298-9.

⁹⁰P.R.O., WO93/49, p.73.

⁹¹See appendix 6 (Irish Western Front database) for full details of this case.

martial review from August 1914 to May 1915.⁹² From May 1915 it would seem that F. E. Smith, as Solicitor General and later Attorney General took over this responsibility, until he left office.⁹³ The role of the Commander in Chief, British Expeditionary Force, is unclear. It is certain that Sir John French and later Sir Douglas Haig were given the final decision as to whether or not an execution should be carried out on a man serving under their command, but their responsibility does not appear to have extended any further.

The Judge Advocate General's office consisted of very few staff and it is incredible that courts martial records were so carefully scrutinised. On the 22nd. January 1918 the office employed nine officers, five civilian staff, three male clerks and messengers, three boy clerks and five woman clerks.⁹⁴ Closer examination of the military officers employed in the office reveals that, of the eleven officers working there in April 1918, eight were qualified barristers and three solicitors. Interestingly, of this eleven, five were Territorial Force officers and two, Second Lieutenants Reginald R. Croon-Johnson and Frank C. Motto of the 14th. Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, had only thirteen months and one and a half years commissioned service respectively and, therefore, while both Barristers, neither would have been eligible to sit on a District, General or Field General Courts Martial themselves!⁹⁵

The Judge Advocate General's office was very much a "Cinderella service" in other respects. By May 1918 more office space was desperately needed.⁹⁶ The employment of civilian staff was severely curtailed by the introduction of conscription and by May 1917 civilian clerks were working up to thirty hours overtime per week.⁹⁷

⁹²M. and E. Brock (eds.) H. H. Asquith; Letters to Venetia Stanley, O.U.P., Oxford, 1982, p.338.

⁹³Second Earl of Birkenhead, The Life of F. E. Smith, First Earl of Birkenhead, Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1959, p.397.

⁹⁴Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/30, pp.434-5.

⁹⁵Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/31, pp.131-3.

⁹⁶Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/31, p.301.

⁹⁷Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/27, p.735.

Equally, in April 1918 the Judge Advocate General complained that he was not receiving War Office circulars regularly, or even at all.⁹⁸

With this small military and civilian staff, a great deal of work had to be transacted. The Judge Advocate General outlined the role of his office on 13th. May 1917;

The work at present consists of the following:

- A) Renewing the proceedings of all G[eneral] F.[ield] G.[eneral] and D.[istrict] C.[ourt] M.[artial] and Mil[itary] Courts which now amount on an average to 1,200 per week.
- B) Advising on:-
 1. Ques[tions] submitted by the W[ar] O[ffice].
 2. Ques[tions] submitted by G[eneral] O[fficers] C[ommanding] with regard to confirmation of proceedings and otherwise.
 3. The charges and evidence in the case of all G[eneral] C.[ourt] M.[artial] in the U.K..
 4. The charges and evidence in all cases of fraud in the U.K..
 5. Questions submitted by D[eputy] J[udge] A[dvocate] G[enerals] in all parts of the world.
 6. Questions submitted by any other Military Authority.⁹⁹

Front line officers took very different views of the role of the Judge Advocate General's office in amending sentences. Captain W. A. Montgomery, 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, writing to his family stated;

⁹⁸Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/31, p.31.

⁹⁹Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/27, p.933.

I still continue to do lots of legal and judicial work. I am President of a Court again tomorrow. Field General Court Martial work is very interesting, very practical, very quick and very safe provided that evidence is recorded fairly at both the taking of the Summary of Evidence prior to the trial and again during the trial, it is very, very unlikely that a miscarriage might occur in any case. There are so many reviewing and commuting authorities above the Court President who have the benefit of the advice of experienced barristers. There are excellent safeguards all along the line of whole procedure. It is all singularly free from red tape.¹⁰⁰

The 4th. Division Staff took a rather different view of the system, noting;

A protest sent on the tone of a minute by D.J.A.G. imputing carelessness to B[riga]de Staff and to Court in the case of a Court Martial, the decisions of the D.J.A.G. have caused dis-satisfaction as it is obvious he does not make any allowances for it is doubtful if he realises the difficult conditions under which Courts Martial have to be conducted in the front lines.¹⁰¹

Few private soldiers make any reference to courts martial. One member of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, in his diary for the 14th. September 1916 noted; "I congratulate myself. I have two years service today. Two years under the Army Act, and not yet shot at dawn, surely a miracle."¹⁰² This statement is somewhat ambiguous, but does suggest that other ranks did give some thought to the possibility of court martial and understood

¹⁰⁰Letter, Montgomery to his parents, 10/3/17, P.R.O.N.I., D.2794/1/1/23.

¹⁰¹Entries for 24th. December 1914, in war diary of 4th. Division, P.R.O., WO154/25 and WO95/1449.

¹⁰²Anon., Service with the 14th. battalion Royal Irish Rifles (Young Citizen Volunteers), 1914-18 war, unpublished account held at Royal Ulster Rifles museum, Belfast, p.173.

what the ultimate penalty could be. J. Brophy and E. Partridge, themselves veterans of the Great War, state;

Once the machinery of military law was set in motion, there was little injustice done, except what is inherent in its rough and ready methods. Injustices began before that. If a private soldier incurred the dislike of an unscrupulous superior, his life might be made a misery and there was no way of escape for him from a thousand daily vexations and petty punishments.¹⁰³

This perception suggests that private soldiers generally accepted the authority of courts martial and did believe that they would receive a fair hearing at them. However, the courts martial system seems to have held little interest for most soldiers as it does not appear to feature at all in either trench journalism, or soldiers marching songs,¹⁰⁴ both important forms of media where British soldiers raised their grievances against the military system.

This leads on to the issue of “informal discipline” in the British army. At its most extreme this involved shooting retreating troops¹⁰⁵ but it could take much more subtle forms and seems to have been practised fairly widely in Irish regular and New Army battalions. Captain Montgomery of the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles gives an example of “informal discipline” at work;

¹⁰³J. Brophy and E. Partridge, The Long Trail: What the British soldier sang and said in 1914-18, Andre Deutsch, London, 1965, p.96.

¹⁰⁴See *ibid*; K. Dallas, The Cruel Wars; 100 Soldier's Songs from Agincourt to Ulster, Wolfe Publishing Ltd., 1972, H. Williamson (ed.) The Wipers Times, Peter Davies, London, 1973 and The Incinerator (Journal of the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles), numbers one and two, held in the Somme Heritage Centre, Newtownards.

¹⁰⁵See F. P. Crozier, The Men I Killed, Michael Joseph Ltd., London, 1939, p.86 and tletter from Major T. H. Westmacott to his wife, March 1918, Westmacott papers, I.W.M., 87/13/1, for examples of this.

I got a draft the other day. Undesirables from the 3rd. Batt. in Dublin mostly old soldiers - tried some of the old tricks on the young fellow that couldn't know anything, I don't but nice and quietly I said 'Sergt. Major please arrange to have these people well beaten after parade, I don't want to be bothered writing things on their conduct sheets. I don't like writing. If one beating isn't enough you needn't bother me about it. Just have 'em beaten everyday at reveille for as long as it takes to lick 'em into our shape. When we get 'em in the trenches we can see if any of them are likely to come up to our standards or not.¹⁰⁶

The attitude of Captain Gerald Achilles Burgoyne is even more interesting as he had served in the 3rd. Dragoon Guards during the Boer War of 1899-1902 and in the 3rd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles (Special Reserve) before joining the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles. He recalled that the 'worst man' in his company had forgotten to draw ammunition before coming up to the line; "I kicked him as far as I could and then hammered him over the back with my stick,..., I think I'd have shot him had I had my revolver on me at the time."¹⁰⁷ Burgoyne justified this by noting that this man had put the entire company at risk.

During the Great War the massive expansion of the B.E.F. raised major problems for the military justice system. Firstly, a number of colonial and dominion units, most notably the Australian forces, were not subject to the same system of military law as the British army. Secondly, the creation of new units, such as the Royal Air Force, Women's

¹⁰⁶ Letter of 24th. July 1916 from Montgomery to his parents, P.R.O.N.I., D.2794/1/1/13.

¹⁰⁷C. Davison (ed.) *The Burgoyne Diaries*, Thomas Harmsworth Publishing, London, 1985, p.60.

Army Auxiliary Force and Chinese Labour Corps, raised serious issues. Thirdly, military law had, increasingly to deal with civilian groups; most notably conscientious objectors to military service and Irish rebels captured after the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin.

Colonial units which had served in the Second Boer War were all disciplined under the British Army Act and the expectation of a short European war meant that little consideration had been given to the employment of these units in future wars.¹⁰⁸ However, during 1903-11 the Australian government had passed a number of Defence Acts which not only introduced a system of universal military service which was unknown in Britain, but also meant that Australian units serving overseas would no longer come under the authority of the British Army Act.

This saw a number of differences between Australian and British military law, the most serious being that Australians could not be executed for desertion. A more serious flaw was that an Australian soldier found guilty of murder could not be sentenced to death under the Australian Act, while under the British Army Act the only punishment that a court martial could award for murder was death. This situation led to an embarrassing problem in February 1918 when this situation actually arose. The Judge Advocate General had to recommend that either the accused soldier be found guilty of manslaughter or the law revised.¹⁰⁹

The Canadian Expeditionary Force originally served in Britain and Europe under the provisions of the British Army Act. However, in 1917 this situation changed, as an Order in Council deemed all members of the C.E.F. to be members of the Canadian Militia serving overseas.¹¹⁰ This was, apparently, a poorly planned political gesture, designed to

¹⁰⁸For example, the Judge Advocate General did not receive a copy of the Australian Defence Act until June 1918. Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/31, p.626.

¹⁰⁹Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/30, p.499 and pp.845-7.

¹¹⁰D. Morton, "Exerting Control: The Development of Canadian Authority over the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-19", in T. Travers and C. Archer (eds.) *Men at War*.

give the Canadian government more control, at least in theory, over the C.E.F.. In reality this meant that Canadian troops were still tried by courts martial of the British pattern, the main difference being that Canadian officers exclusively comprised the court.¹¹¹ However, this change in the status of the C.E.F. did open up an embarrassing legal loophole, in that it was not an offence under the Canadian Militia Act for a soldier to desert from the British regular forces and join a Canadian Militia unit. The fact that the Judge Advocate General commented on this in February 1918 suggests that at least one British soldier had made use of this legal anomaly.¹¹²

The other "white" dominions of South Africa and New Zealand were content to have their troops, serving overseas, disciplined by the British Army Act. However, Indian units serving on the Western Front were tried under the Indian Army Act and this extended not only to British units which were brigaded with Indian troops, i.e. the 1st. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, but British units temporarily attached to the Indian Corps. Thus, in June 1915, seventy four men of the British 8th. and 49th. Divisions were tried by courts martial serving under the auspices of the Indian Army Act.¹¹³

The British army clearly took account of colonial views in carrying out executions. Table 2.1, overleaf, gives figures for men sentenced to death between 1914 and 1920. This table does suggest that the British government was very wary of executing soldiers provided by the white dominions; although whether this was due to the influence which the dominions exerted over the British government during the Great War or other factors is unclear.

Politics, Technology and Innovation in the Twentieth Century, Precedent, Chicago, 1982, p.14.

¹¹¹Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/31, p.514.

¹¹²Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/30, p.531.

¹¹³Deputy Judge Advocate General's war diary, Indian Corps, May-December 1915. P.R.O., WO154/15.

Table 2.1. Death sentences passed in the B.E.F., 1914-18.¹¹⁴

	Committed	Carried Out
Imperial Troops	2,399	291 (10.82%)
Colonial Forces	5	5 (50%)
Overseas Contingents	324	31 (8.73%)
Chinese Labour Corps	3	10 (76.92%)
Coloured Labour Corps	0	4 (100%)
Followers	3	5 (62.5%)

The creation of new units, many of them simply seen as wartime expedients also received little pre-planning in terms of military law. In some instances this could easily be resolved. For example, in the case of Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps, it was decided in July 1918 that, for the purposes of military law, they should be treated as camp followers.¹¹⁵ Royal Navy-Army relations were surprisingly cordial regarding the discipline of the 63rd. (Royal Naval) Division given Field Marshal Lord Kitchener's complaint in December 1914 that;

We have a good deal of trouble with the admiralty [sic.] about the many freaks they are constantly enstating [sic.] in the army, but which they maintain are still under admiralty control. The Motor buses is [sic.] one of these, a large number of armed motor-cars is another which they want us to arm - now I hear that an admiralty flying wing is to be attached to your force. The admiralty are

¹¹⁴Table compiled from figures given in P.R.O., Kew, WO93/49, p.73.

¹¹⁵Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/32, p.106.

constantly asking me for officers which they use for preparing army experiments,...., I cannot help thinking that when the admiralty have anything they can lend us which we want it should be handed over to the army for complete administration by the army until returned.¹¹⁶

Men serving in the 63rd. (Royal Naval) Division were tried under the Army Act by military courts, with the findings being submitted to both the Judge Advocate General and the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty for their consideration.¹¹⁷ However, as late as June 1917 there was some difficulty in disciplining naval personnel under the Army Act as it was unclear whether a leading seaman should be considered to be a corporal for the purposes of the Act.¹¹⁸

Other "new" units posed much more serious problems. The Chinese Labour Corps had a poorly defined status in military law. In May 1917 the Judge Advocate General considered the Corps to be; "employed by or in the service of His Majesty's troops within the meaning of section 176 (A) or alternatively as followers of His Majesty's troops within the meaning of section 176 (10). In my opinion on the above assumption they will be subject to military law while at the rest camp."¹¹⁹ However, by March 1918 the Judge Advocate General was expressing concern over the status of the Chinese Labour Corps as it did not appear to be a properly constituted military unit.¹²⁰ One must assume, from the large number of Field General Courts Martial held on members of the

¹¹⁶Letter, Kitchener to Field Marshal Sir John French, 11/12/14, French papers, I.W.M., PP/MCR/C33/588.

¹¹⁷Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/27, p.191.

¹¹⁸Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/27, p.1043.

¹¹⁹Letter of 9th. May 1917 from the Judge Advocate General to Lieutenant-General, Commanding in Chief, Eastern Command, Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/27.

¹²⁰Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/30, p.1121 and WO83/31, p.499.

Chinese Labour Corps in 1918¹²¹ that it was ultimately decided to view the Chinese Labour Corps as a military unit, subject to the provisions of the Army Act.

While oversights on the legal status of such a wartime expedient as the Chinese Labour Corps are, perhaps, understandable, surprisingly little thought seems to have gone into the precise legal status of members of the Royal Air Force when it was created in 1918. A number of legal difficulties soon arose; in May 1918 the Judge Advocate General pointed out that R.A.F. personnel attached to naval or army units could, respectively, be tried under naval law or the Army Act.¹²² In August 1918 another serious legal anomaly occurred as the Judge Advocate General queried whether, as head of an independent force, General Trenchard was actually under the command of Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig. At the same time there was consideration given to how Trenchard could actually establish a Field General Court Martial to try a member of the R.A.F.¹²³

The whole issue of conscription and the position of conscientious objectors put enormous strain on the military justice system. The Adjutant-General, Sir Nevil Macready, outlined to the cabinet on 15th. May 1916 the difficulties of bringing conscientious objectors under the jurisdiction of the Army Act;

It cannot be too clearly understood that once a man is handed over by a decision of a tribunal to the military authorities as a soldier, it is not for the military authorities to consider the reasons such a man may have for refusing to do his work. It is the clear duty of every commanding officer to do his best with the legitimate means at his disposal to make every man who is handed over to him an efficient soldier.¹²⁴

¹²¹See Field General Courts Martial registers, P.R.O., WO213/24-6.

¹²²Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/31, pp.285-7.

¹²³Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/32, pp.291-2.

¹²⁴P.R.O., CAB37/147/35, cited in, J. Rae, Conscience and Politics: The British Government and the Conscientious Objector to Military Service, 1916-19, Oxford

Of course the first stage in the process of proving conscientious objection was left to the Local Tribunals, the majority of whose members were civilians.¹²⁵ Ultimately, the legality of a man's service in the armed forces had to be decided in a civil, not a military, court. However, as late as January 1918, the Judge Advocate General had to make this position clear, noting that Military Policemen should not try to arrest reluctant conscripts as firstly, they had no right to enter private houses and, secondly, they would be open to actions for false imprisonment in cases of mistaken identity.¹²⁶

The problem which the Adjutant General had stressed was that, if a conscientious objector was drafted into the army, after appearing before a tribunal or civil court, then the Army Act gave C.O.s no latitude to treat conscientious objectors any differently than other soldiers. Historians have generally been sceptical of the Non-Conscription Fellowship's statements regarding the treatment of conscientious objectors by the military. J. Rae was unconvinced by the figures given by J. W. Graham regarding the number of members of the Non-Conscription Fellowship sentenced to death in France.¹²⁷ Consideration of newly released material demonstrates Graham's work to be substantially true; whereas by 26th. June 1916 he claimed that thirty four men of the Non Combatant Corps, serving in France, had been condemned to death, actually thirty five men of this corps had been sentenced to death by Field General Courts Martial by this date.¹²⁸

University Press, Oxford, 1970, p.135.

¹²⁵K. R. Grieves, "Military Tribunal Papers: The Case of Leek Local Tribunal in the First World War", *Archives*, XVI, 70, 1983 and A. R. Mack, "Conscription and Conscientious Objection in Leeds and York during the First World War", unpublished M.Phil., University of York, 1982, p.156.

¹²⁶Judge Advocate General's minute book, P.R.O., WO83/30, p.289.

¹²⁷J. W. Graham, *Conscription and Conscience: A History 1916-19*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1922, reprinted by Augustus M. Kelly Publishers, New York, 1969, pp.115-6 and J. Rae, *Conscience and Politics*, pp.152-3.

¹²⁸See entries for 7/6/16, 10/6/16, and 12/6/16, relating to members of the Eastern Non Combatant Corps, 2nd. Company, Northern Non Combatant Corps and 3rd. Company, Eastern Non Combatant Corps, Field General Courts Martial Registrar, P.R.O., WO213/9

All the members of the Non Combatant Corps who were sentenced to death in France had their sentences commuted to ten years penal servitude. This, both Graham and Rae agree, was a result of political intervention by Gilbert Murray, the Liberal Chief Whip. H. H. Asquith made it clear to Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig that no conscientious objector was to be executed without Cabinet approval.¹²⁹

The military had dealt harshly with conscientious objectors serving in the Non Combatant Corps in France and, indeed, many senior officers were not well disposed towards conscientious objectors. For example, Brigadier General Sir Wyndam Childs, Director of Personnel Services at the War Office stated; "For my part I always thought that the No-Conscription Fellowship, or at any rate its organisers, should have been dealt with under the Incitement to Mutiny Act."¹³⁰ Equally, Sir Nevil Macready, the Adjutant General, believed that conscientious objection status should only be granted on religious grounds.¹³¹ However, the existing Army Act and the legislation used to introduce conscription made no allowance for conscientious objectors serving in the British army. In having such men executed military officers would, simply, have been carrying out their duty under the Army Act. The Adjutant General certainly did not enjoy dealing with the complicated issue of conscientious objectors noting;

The whole question of conscientious objection on the lines laid down by the Prime Minister was complicated, irritating, involved much unnecessary work at a time when pressure was heaviest, and created much discontent, both in the Army and among the conscientious objectors themselves.¹³²

¹²⁹J. Rae, *Conscience and Politics*, p.154.

¹³⁰W. Childs, *Episodes and Reflections: Being Some Records from the Life of Major General Sir Wyndam Childs*, Cassel and Co. Ltd., London, 1930, p.149.

¹³¹Sir N. Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, Hutchinson and Co., London, 1924, vol.I, p.251.

¹³²*ibid*, vol.I, p.251.

While British generals of the First World War are normally seen as opposing political interference in military matters, it would seem that the army authorities were glad to hand most of the work relating to conscientious objectors over to the Home Office in June 1916.¹³³

In dealing with conscientious objectors military law had been forced to come into contact with the civilian population. During the Boer War, of course, civilians had been tried by courts martial, for taking part in or aiding guerrilla activity. However, this had been far from satisfactory. As early as 1900 Joseph Chamberlain and Sir Alfred Milner had proposed that a High Court Judge should preside over courts martial; a suggestion completely rejected by the Commander in Chief.¹³⁴

Some officers were uncomfortable about trying civilians for serious crimes. Major Sir Francis Vane noted;

The more serious cases, namely those accused of High Treason - were all very young men or even boys, of course, Dutch, and they undoubtedly had joined the enemy out of a sense of kinsmanship, and the enthusiasm of youth. The authorities, however, had made it as difficult for us to be lenient as they could, for it was insisted that when a person was charged with rebellion he should be also indicted for attempted murder - and if you found him guilty of one you had to find him guilty of the other. This was very much resented as an obvious attempt at biasing the Bench in favour of severe judgements.¹³⁵

During peacetime, it was very rare for a civilian to be tried by a military court. One of the few examples is of Frank Duigman of Emmet Road, Inchicore, who was tried

¹³³J. Rae, Conscience and Politics, p.159.

¹³⁴P.R.O., Kew, WO32/8177.

¹³⁵Sir Francis Vane, Agin the Governments, p.142.

by a military court in Dublin, on the 11th. May 1914 for being intoxicated and wearing the uniform of the South Irish Horse, a unit of which he was not a member. He was fined five shillings for these offences.¹³⁶ Equally, in the 1902-14 period, little consideration was given to the issue of civilians who would be liable for trial under military law; which is rather surprising given the activities of the Ulster Volunteer Force, Irish Volunteers and Irish Citizens' Army during 1913-14 .

During the Great War, the War Office had to deal with two very different groups, apart from conscientious objectors, who straddled the line between civilians and members of a military force namely, German and Austro-Hungarian nationals interned in Britain on the outbreak of war and members of the Irish Volunteers and Irish Citizens' Army arrested after the Easter Rising of 1916. In the case of German internees, it appears to have been War Office policy to treat them as Prisoners of War, as otherwise it would be very difficult to discipline this group. However, as late as January 1918 some questions were being raised about this legal status.¹³⁷

The issue of Irish prisoners was more complex and emotive than that of interned German civilians. Following the rising and courts martial of 149 rebels by Field General Courts Martial,¹³⁸ a large number of prisoners were held on the charge of being; "reasonably suspected of having favoured, promoted or assisted an armed insurrection against His Majesty."¹³⁹ While these internees were initially split up and sent to various civil prisons in the United Kingdom before being sent to an internment camp at Frongoch, it would seem that from June 1916 the army regarded them as Prisoners of War.¹⁴⁰ In May 1916 a "combing out of innocents" was held of the Irish prisoners as there was the

¹³⁶Registrar of Convictions of Soldiers, Kilmainham Papers, N.L.I., Ms.1298.

¹³⁷Judge Advocate General's minute books, P.R.O., WO83/30, pp.255-63.

¹³⁸See Field General Court Martial registars, P.R.O., WO213/9-10.

¹³⁹Letter from General Sir John G. Maxwell, G.O.C., Irish Command to Secretary, War Office, 29/5/16, P.R.O., WO32/9571.

¹⁴⁰P.R.O., WO32/9571.

possibility that a prisoner could obtain a writ of Habeas Corpus and thus gain his or her release.¹⁴¹ This demonstrates that even in the area of holding rebels, under military guard, during war time, military law was subject to civil law.

As in the issue of conscientious objectors, senior officers at the War Office found the work relating to the Irish prisoners time consuming and unrewarding. Brigadier General Childs, Director of Personnel Services stated;

The number of parliamentary questions on the Irish question are now appalling and I cannot keep pace with them, I never get any chance to do my own work and I spend my whole time doing yours which as you know consists in running from one Cabinet Minister to another. It cannot go on much longer as the work of my Directorate will cease. Conscientious Objectors absorb the few spare moments that I may be in my room and the parliamentary questions on this subject are simply appalling.¹⁴²

As over the difficult military-political issue of treatment of conscientious objectors, the military authorities seem to have been relieved that the Home Office took over responsibility for the "Sinn Fein" prisoners in May 1916.¹⁴³

Of course, not all officers wanted to divorce military from political considerations and, at least in one instance, military law was used as a pawn in the conflict between "frocks" and "brass-hats". When F. E. Smith, then Attorney-General, visited France in February 1916 he did so in uniform (he held the rank of staff colonel), but without a military pass. A practical joke by officers meant that a telegram to the Adjutant General,

¹⁴¹Letter from Brigadier General B. E. W. Childs, to Lieutenant Colonel(?) Byrne, 22/5/16, P.R.O., WO32/9571.

¹⁴²Letter from Childs to Byrne, 24/5/16, P.R.O., WO32/9571.

¹⁴³Letter to Secretary, War Office, from Under Secretary, Home Office, 24/5/16, P.R.O., WO32/9571.

Sir Nevil Macready, from the War Office was altered so that instead of reading that Smith should be given a military escort it inferred that he should be arrested.

F. E. Smith was rudely awoken at 4 a.m. by two Military Policemen and told that if he moved he would be shot. Macready then interviewed Smith, later remembering;

He was annoyed, perhaps naturally, that he had been technically 'arrested' a step that was not intended, the original order from G. H. Q. being that he should be escorted back to G. H. Q.. It was, I think, the fear of ridicule more than anything else that disturbed the equilibrium of the Attorney-General, but, as I pointed out to him, the Commander in Chief's order in regard to passes had evidently not been unwittingly evaded, because the other members of his party had arranged for the necessary permits, and further, in view of the fact that he himself had been on the Staff of the Indian Corps earlier in the war, it was a matter of greater surprise that he should have placed himself in such a position. In addition, I explained that had an application been made for him to visit Lieutenant Colonel Winston Churchill, I should have been glad to arrange it with the 2nd. Army.¹⁴⁴

There was a certain irony in F. E. Smith's detention under military law. Not only from his appointment as Solicitor General in May 1915 to at least January 1916 had he taken over the responsibility for reviewing courts martial from Kitchener, but when arrested, he was the government's chief legal officer and, conceivably, the final arbiter in any dispute between the use of civil and military law.

As Smith's most recent biographer concludes on this whole episode;

¹⁴⁴Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, vol.I, p.233.

F. E. was in the wrong, of course, and the alteration of the telegram does not alter that. Nevertheless the impulse to alter it, the evident relish with which the authorities from Macready downwards carried out the false instruction, and the glee with which the story was repeated in military circles for years afterwards add up to a striking illustration of the poisoned relations that existed between soldiers and politicians in the First World War.¹⁴⁵

During the Great War, the whole process of military law came under considerable scrutiny and a number of reforms were proposed. However, while few of these were implemented, they do merit some attention due to the criticisms made of military law by the Darling Report and some modern historians.

Most of the proposed reforms were voiced in Parliament, but gained comparatively little support. One of the most radical proposals made was that put forward by Philip Snowden, M.P., who in November 1917 proposed that a jury of soldiers should try court martial cases.¹⁴⁶

Another proposal, which would drastically have altered the punishments awarded by courts martial was that field punishment should be abolished.¹⁴⁷ The campaign to have field punishment abolished received considerable support. A number of branches of various Trades Union (for example, the London District of the Workers' Union and Crewe Number 5 Branch of the National Union of Railwaymen) and private individuals (including Rev. Thomas Alexander, the Presbyterian Minister at Crossgar, Co. Down) wrote to the Secretary of State for War in late 1916 and early 1917 in support of this reform.¹⁴⁸ All G.O.C.s were contacted to establish their views regarding field punishment

¹⁴⁵J. Campbell, *F. E. Smith, First Earl of Birkenhead*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1983, p.429.

¹⁴⁶Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 5th. Series, vol.XCVIII, c.1426, 31/11/17.

¹⁴⁷Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 5th. Series, vol.LXXXV, c.841, 8/8/16.

¹⁴⁸See correspondence in "Cruxifixion' as Field Punishment at the Front, Protest re.",

and, as only one senior officer (the Commander in Chief, Force D, Mesopotamia) was in favour of the abolition of this measure, field punishment was retained.¹⁴⁹

A number of changes were made to the system of military justice which operated in the British army during the Great War. Most of these were purely administrative and required no change in the law; for example the introduction of the "referencing system" for men convicted by courts martial. However, two important changes required government action, the introduction of the Suspended Sentences Act and the appointment of a Royal Commission to enquire into the murders carried out by Captain Bowen-Colthurst in Dublin in 1916 and the greater openness which this had brought to military justice, both required government action.

Early in the war and apparently on his own authority as Director of Personnel Services, Brigadier General Sir Wyndam Childs introduced the referencing system for convicted men outlined earlier in this chapter. Evidently the new scheme was in use by January 1915. Childs introduced this amendment as a man of his old battalion, whom he knew to be an effective soldier, had been sentenced to death for desertion. The procedure introduced by Childs helped to maintain the paternalistic nature of the British army, in the face of high losses and, more importantly, provided the confirming officer with more detailed information on the sentenced soldier and any possible grounds for a reduction in sentence.¹⁵⁰

The Suspended Sentences Act of 1915 meant that a man sentenced to imprisonment, or death, by a court martial, could be returned for service with his unit, if he re-offended his original sentence would be immediately imposed. In his autobiography Childs suggested that this was introduced on his initiative;

P.R.O., WO32/5460.

¹⁴⁹Letter, Adjutant General to Secretary of State for War, 11/12/16, P.R.O., WO32/5460.

¹⁵⁰Childs, *Episodes and Reflections*, pp.140-2.

I was walking through the streets of St. Omer just after we got there when I met about a hundred and twenty soldiers being marched under escort through the streets. They were singing and whistling and in very good humour. I ascertained that they were all on their way to the base to undergo punishment in the military prisons there. It was pretty obvious, at once, that such a state of affairs could not be allowed to continue, as it was evident that certain types of men would commit crimes solely to avoid duty at the front.

I spoke to Sir Nevil [Macready, the Adjutant General] at once and that same evening drafted the Army Suspension of Sentences Act, which went through Parliament without opposition and became law within about fourteen days. The Act enabled the military authorities to suspend the sentence of any offender, or to put it into execution at any time. Thus, when a soldier committed an offence and got ten year's penal servitude, he found that, instead of going home to England to undergo his sentence (penal servitude cannot be carried out in the field), he actually remained in the trenches, with the sentence hanging over his head. Conversely, there was power taken to remit any sentence, no matter how severe, as a reward for a period of good conduct or any act of gallantry.¹⁵¹

As well as closing what must, to some, have appeared an attractive way out of the trenches, the Suspended Sentences Act was also, clearly, a response to manpower shortages in the British Army. As C. Pugsley demonstrates, the Act was widely used and the number of men per 100 in the British Army sent to prison fell from 4.5 in April 1915, just before the Act was introduced, to 0.8 in November 1918.¹⁵² Equally, suspended sentences were implemented on men who had committed serious military crimes and were

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, pp.137-8.

¹⁵² C. Pugsley, *On The Fringe of Hell*, pp.354-5.

there must have been considerable concern over whether the men could actually be rehabilitated. For example, the decision to suspend the sentences of 106 men of the 2nd. and 7th. Battalions, Royal Irish Regiment and 7/8th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in April 1918, who had been sentenced to between five and ten years penal servitude for mutiny, seems incomprehensible unless seen against the serious manning problems being experienced by these units.¹⁵³

It should be noted that this response to manpower problems was not unique to the British army. In May 1916 prison sentences were replaced with corporal punishment in the field in the Ottoman army to prevent further depletion of the army.¹⁵⁴ By April 1917 the French army had also introduced a system similar to the British suspended sentences.

Lastly, political pressure forced certain elements of military law to become more open. The most obvious example of this was in the murder of three unarmed civilians; Francis Sheehy Skeffington, Thomas Dickson and Patrick James McIntyre by Captain Bowen Colthurst, 3rd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles during the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin. Bowen-Colthurst shot these men, who had nothing to do with the insurrection (Sheehy-Skeffington was a pacifist and the others both editors of Unionist newspapers) without any form of court martial. The military authorities in Ireland were apparently prepared to ignore this incident. However, Major Sir Francis Vane took the matter directly to Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, with the result that Bowen-Colthurst was tried by a General Court Martial and found guilty but insane.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³See chapter seven for further discussion of these cases.

¹⁵⁴E. Zürcher, "Little Mehmet in the Desert: The Ottoman Soldiers Experience", in H. Cecil and P. Liddle, *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, Leo Cooper, London, 1996, p.234.

¹⁵⁵See P.R.O., WO32/9506 and Sir Francis Vane, *Agin the Governments*, 1928, pp.262-271.

Vane also approached a number of Irish M.P.s, including John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party and William O'Brien,¹⁵⁶ which brought it clearly into the political arena. This meant that, in addition to the court martial, a Royal Commission was appointed to enquire into Bowen-Colthurst's actions. Vane suggested that the Royal Commission simply served to deflect blame from the military authorities.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the report's conclusion that; "The shooting of unarmed and unresisting civilians without trial constitutes the offence of murder, whether martial law has been proclaimed or not. We should have deemed it superfluous to point this out were it not that the failure to realise and apply the elementary principle seems to explain the free hand which Captain Bowen-Colthurst was not restrained from exercising throughout the period of crisis,"¹⁵⁸ was suitably critical of both Bowen-Colthurst's activities and the military authorities' refusal to restrain him.

Comparisons between British and other nations' military law are difficult to make, partly as little research has been carried out on French, German, or United States military law during this period and also as the whole basis of military law in continental Europe was different to its British counterpart. Whereas, in Britain, martial law was only imposed when civil law had broken down, the best example being during the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916, the declaration of war immediately saw the introduction of a "state of siege" in France and Germany. H. W. Koch notes the implications of this in Germany;

With the proclamation of the state of war the state of siege was automatically invoked which made the military commanders in the various districts the supreme heads of regional government in co-operation with the

¹⁵⁶F. Vane, *Agin the Governments*, p.268.

¹⁵⁷*ibid*, pp.271-2.

¹⁵⁸A Royal Commission on the Arrest and Subsequent Treatment of Mr. Francis Sheehy Skeffington, Mr. Thomas Dickson and Mr. Patrick James Mc Intyre, H.M.S.O., London, Cmd.8376, 1916.

existing civil authorities. They had powers to issue local decrees, prohibitions, arrest requisition and fix prices. Extra-ordinary war courts were instituted. By 1914-15 there were forty six of them; the highest number reached was sixty. Each of them had five judges: two civilian judges, one of which presided and three officers. Throughout the war they dealt with about 150,000 cases, but figures do not exist to show how many led to conviction, acquittal or dismissal.¹⁵⁹

Until December 1916 these courts were responsible only to the Kaiser.

Work on French courts martial is dominated by the reaction to the 1917 mutinies. Pedrocini estimates that, following the mutinies 3,427 soldiers were convicted of offences relating to the mutinies; of these 554 received death sentences and 49 (16%) were actually executed.¹⁶⁰ This does seem to be a very low number of executions compared to the British total of 346 between 1914 and 1920. But we need to balance this by firstly, considering that, during the entire war, more than 49 French soldiers must have been executed i.e., some soldiers must have been executed in the periods before and after the mutinies. Equally, it is clear that a number of French soldiers were summarily executed during the war.¹⁶¹ Pétain apparently approved of this action.¹⁶²

Some other aspects of French military law merit comparison with the British system. Firstly, in the aftermath of the 1917 mutinies, civilian control over the courts

¹⁵⁹H. W. Koch, *A Constitutional History of Germany in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Longman, London, 1984, p.188.

¹⁶⁰Pedrocini, *Les Mutineries de 1917*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1967, pp.194 and 215, cited in L. Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War I*, Princetown University Press, Princetown, 1994, p.206.

¹⁶¹See R.M. Watt, *Dare Call it Treason*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1964, p.175 and J. Williams, *Mutiny 1917*, Heinemann, London, 1962, pp.203 and 241, on this issue.

¹⁶²R. M. Watt, *Dare Call it Treason*, p.199.

martial system was effectively suspended. The decision on whether or not a sentence should be confirmed being delegated to Petain by both the President and Minister for War.¹⁶³ Secondly, a number of punishments were awarded by French courts martial which were completely alien to British military law. For example penal units existed in the French army;

such as the Zéphyr, a unit stationed in Africa and composed of Army outcasts who were kept in discipline by methods verging on sadism and were given military tasks too dangerous and dirty even for the Foreign Legion. Some of the more fortunate offenders were lucky enough to be sentenced to serve with 'punishment companies' in the most dangerous spots in the trench lines until, in the opinion of their specially trained officers, they had earned the privilege of restoration to an infantry division which was considered much less hazardous by comparison.¹⁶⁴

Lastly, French courts martial were quite happy to use innocent men as examples, which again contrasts sharply with the British practice. As Leonard Smith comments; "the courts-martial 'stigmatised' a particular group of men who appeared to have behaved no differently from dozens of others who were not prosecuted but who could nevertheless conveniently bear responsibility for the collectivity."¹⁶⁵

The United States of America's courts martial system demonstrates a strong racist tendency, which is much stronger than that evident in British military law, given that only two of the divisions in the American Expeditionary Force, were composed of black personnel. Between 5th. November 1917 and 20th. June 1919 there were eleven

¹⁶³ *ibid.*, p.198.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.202-3.

¹⁶⁵ L. Smith, Between Mutiny and Obedience, pp.206-7.

executions in the American Expeditionary Force. Two of the men were white, one either white or native American and eight black.¹⁶⁶

One country whose courts martial system has been well researched is Italy's and this also bears comparison with Britain as both countries put around 5,200,000 men in the field during the Great War. From the beginning of Italy's intervention in the war the Commander in Chief, Luigi Cadorna, made it clear that it was the duty of N.C.O.s and officers to shoot cowards without benefit of a court martial.¹⁶⁷ Again, as with the French, the number of courts martial which resulted in death was low, 141 during the entire war,¹⁶⁸ but by October 1917 the Italian army had experienced five cases of 'death by lottery' two of them involving decimation of a unit.¹⁶⁹ Soldiers in the Italian army could also be executed for the most minor offences. For example, when General Graziani caught a soldier smoking a pipe during an inspection, he was immediately shot!¹⁷⁰

In conclusion, while much of this chapter may not seem to be directly related to the rest of this thesis, it is important to establish the disciplinary framework within which the B.E.F. operated during 1914-18. This system was far from perfect but was clearly much more just than previous historians writing about it have allowed. The British courts martial system also seems to compare favourably with those operated by other states, especially in its comprehensive reviewing procedures. The courts martial system also seems to have much more in common with Edwardian civil courts than has been previously acknowledged.

¹⁶⁶J. M. Lindley, "A Soldier is also a Citizen." The Controversy over Military Justice, 1917-20, Garland Publishing Inc., New York, 1990, p.119.

¹⁶⁷J. Gooch, "Morale and Discipline in the Italian Army, 1915-18", in H. Cecil and P. H. Liddle (eds.) Facing Armageddon, p.436.

¹⁶⁸ibid, p.442.

¹⁶⁹ibid, p.440.

¹⁷⁰G. Procacci, Soldati e prigionieri italiani nella Grande Guerra, Editori Riuniti, Rome, 1993, reviewed by M. Cornwall in War in History, 3, 2, 1996, p.241.

Clearly the system underwent a number of challenges and changes during the war; especially in dealing with various civilian groups to which little consideration had been given pre-war (conscientious objectors, German and Austro-Hungarian internees and Irish rebels) and new military units (for example, Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps, the Royal Air Force and the Chinese Labour Corps). However, given that the British system of military law had been designed to discipline a small, volunteer army, involved largely in garrison duties and "small wars" throughout the Empire, it should be conceded that the British military justice system adapted well to the challenges of modern warfare and a mass, conscript army.

Chapter 3.

“A Regular Army at War”, The British Expeditionary Force, August 1914 to September 1915.

The period from the landing of the British Expeditionary Force in France in August 1914 until the end of September 1915 saw a large number of strains put on the discipline and morale of the Irish regiments, and the expeditionary force in general. Firstly, there was the transition from a peace-time to a war-time situation, which naturally saw many changes in the British army, not least in its disciplinary code. Offences, such as sleeping on duty and desertion, which would, in peace-time, have led to little more than a short term of imprisonment, became capital offences in wartime.

Secondly, the horrific losses incurred by the B.E.F. led to serious problems. Men, who were either army reservists (who, in some cases had not been in the army since the end of the South African War in 1902) or special reservists (who, in many cases, had very rudimentary training) were required to bring units up to their establishment on the outbreak of war and keep them up to strength for the early part of the war. Many of these reservists were either too old or unfit for active service, and, in at least some cases, resented being commanded by non-commissioned officers who had less service than them.

Time expired men were another potential problem group as, soldiers nearing the end of their “colour service” in August 1914 resented being kept in the army for another year. Lastly, middle class recruits who, in a few cases, had joined Kitchener units, but then been posted as drafts to regular battalions, found the habits and behaviour of their new colleagues unpalatable. Such men, serving in Territorial Force units, had the added grievance that the High Command often did not feel that they were adequately trained for front line service.

High losses also led to serious problems in the supply of officers. While the most decrepit retired officers were used to train New Army battalions in Britain (see

chapter four), a number of officers who were unfit to command did see service in France. Equally, the desperate need for officers saw the rapid commissioning of men from, for example, the ranks of exclusive London Territorial Force units, with only the most minimal officer training.¹

The replacement of N.C.O.s was even more difficult. The shortage of officers saw some of the most intelligent N.C.O.s being promoted to commissioned rank, while the supply of suitable privates, capable of carrying out an N.C.O.s duties, soon dwindled. Within a short space of time many units were thus reliant heavily on N.C.O.s with little experience or those who had been reservists on the outbreak of war.

Thirdly, the Winter of 1914 to 1915 is seen by many historians² as a low point in the B.E.F.'s morale. The unofficial "Christmas Truces" of 1914, some of which lasted into January 1915, certainly caused concern amongst the High Command. This low point in morale seems to have been a result both of the appalling conditions in the trenches and the realisation that no early end to the war was in sight.

Thus, in this chapter, an assessment of the disciplinary problems facing the B.E.F. will be made, based on the courts martial records, which are a much more reliable indicator of indiscipline and poor morale than statistics, either of trench foot or shell shock, used by previous historians.³ Attention will then be devoted to perceived disciplinary problems in the B. E. F. during this period. With reference to Irish units, Sir Roger Casement's attempt to form a German-Irish Brigade in early 1915 will be considered as the failure of Casement's scheme does suggest that even the relatively

¹See, P. Simkins, *Kitchener's Army. The Raising of the New Armies, 1914-16*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1988, pp.217-21 and K. Simpson, "The Officers", in I. F. W. Beckett and K. Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War*, Tom Donovan Publishing Ltd., London, 1990, pp.69-72.

²See for example J. Brent Wilson, "The Morale and Discipline of the B.E.F., 1914-18", unpublished M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1978, p.67 and J. M. Bourne, *Britain and the Great War, 1914-18*, Edward Arnold, London, 1989, p.223.

³J. Brent Wilson, "The Morale and Discipline of the B.E.F.", p.101.

apolitical regular soldier did maintain certain ideals and values which made him actively anti-German even when other factors which would have retained his loyalty to the British Crown had vanished. Consideration will then be given to the morale problems facing the B.E.F. in this period, especially the difficulties involved in keeping the force supplied with both trained personnel and essential equipment. Most importantly, issues, such as comforts funds, recreational activities, religion and the regimental system which helped to maintain morale and discipline will be considered.

A consideration of Irish regiments serving on the Western Front during this period provides a number of interesting insights into discipline in the B.E.F... The most striking feature is the variation of the number of courts martial cases tried in each battalion; as table 3.1, overleaf, demonstrates.

Some of the disparities in this graph are easily explainable. The 2nd. Battalion of the Connaught Rangers were amalgamated with their 1st. Battalion on 5th. December 1914⁴ and only four of the cases in this chart refer to the period after this merger. The comparatively low courts martial rate in the 1st. Battalion of the Irish Guards is seemingly explicable due to the large number of Irish Guards reservists serving in the Royal Irish Constabulary pre war. In August 1914, seventy men from the force were recalled to active service with the Irish Guards, and by 11th. February 1915, a further 200.⁵ Clearly, if such men were involved in any disciplinary action, it could endanger their post-war prospects in the Royal Irish Constabulary.

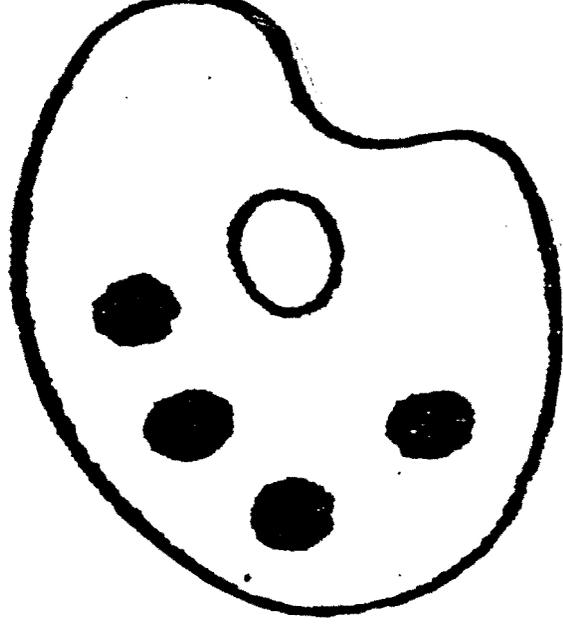
Surprisingly, given their high courts martial record, the 2nd. Battalion of the Leinster Regiment, as part of the 6th. Division did not arrive in France until the 8th. September 1914,⁶ and their disciplinary record thus appears to be very poor. Indeed,

⁴H. F. N. Jourdain, The Connaught Rangers, Royal United Services Institution, London, 1924, vol.I, p. 450.

⁵J. Herily, The Royal Irish Constabulary; A Short History and Genealogical Guide, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 1997, pp. 98-9. Also see, P. Reese, Home-Coming heroes, An Account of the Re-Assimilation of British Military Personnel into Civilian Life, Leo Cooper, London, 1992, p.59, on the unique arrangements made for the employment of retired members of the Irish Guards in the Royal Irish Constabulary.

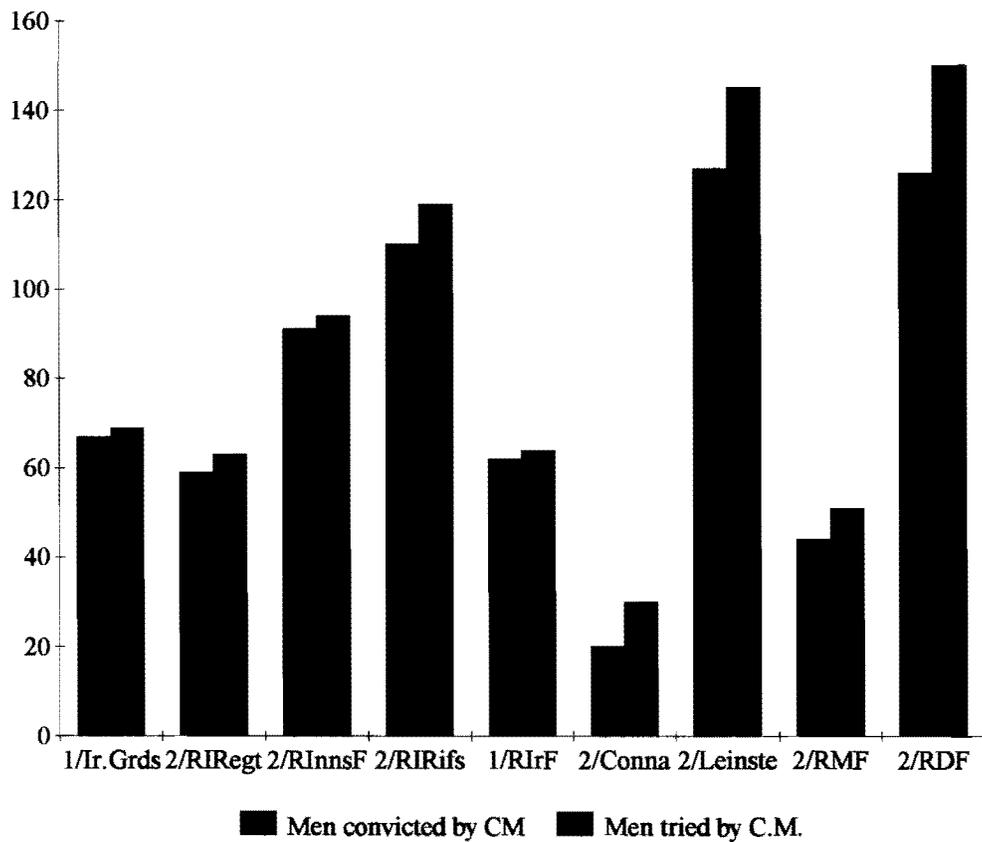
⁶F. E. Whitton, The History of the Prince of Wales Leinster Regiment (Royal

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this record does call into some question the reasons as to why the 6th. Division was detained in Britain after the original expeditionary force left for France.

Table 3.1. Courts Martial held in the Irish infantry battalions in the original expeditionary force, from arrival in France (August 1914) until 30th. September 1915.



However, there appears to be no easy explanation as to this marked difference between battalions, in terms of courts martial. An urban/rural recruiting area may provide part of the explanation, as the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles (with a recruiting area centred on Belfast) and the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers (with

Canadians), vol. II; *The Great War and the Disbandment of the Regiment*, Gale and Polden Ltd., N.D., p. 15.

a recruiting area centred on Dublin City) both had a very high number of men tried by courts martial. As Belfast and Dublin both had heavily unionised work forces in this period one may reasonably have expected some of this class antagonism to spill over into the army. There does seem to be some evidence to support this view as, by April 1915 at least some members of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers had joined the regiment after being locked out during the 1913 general strike in Dublin.⁷ Nevertheless, in the case of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, the argument that the men were drawn from the heavily unionised Belfast workforce seems distinctly unconvincing. John Lucy, serving with this unit pre-war, stressed that many of the men serving in it came from outside the regimental recruiting area. Father Henry Gill made a similar observation when he joined the battalion in late 1914, noting the unexpectedly high number of Catholics serving in this unit. Finally, Nicholas Perry's work confirms that the regular battalions of the Royal Irish Rifles obtained a large percentage of recruits from outside their recruiting area.⁸

Lastly, an obvious answer to high courts martial rates would lie in losses in action; units with high losses naturally having fewer courts martial cases. However, again this does not provide a solution. While the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers had 627 deaths in 1914 to 1915 and the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, had a death toll of 648 over the same period; the 2nd. Battalion of the Leinster Regiment,

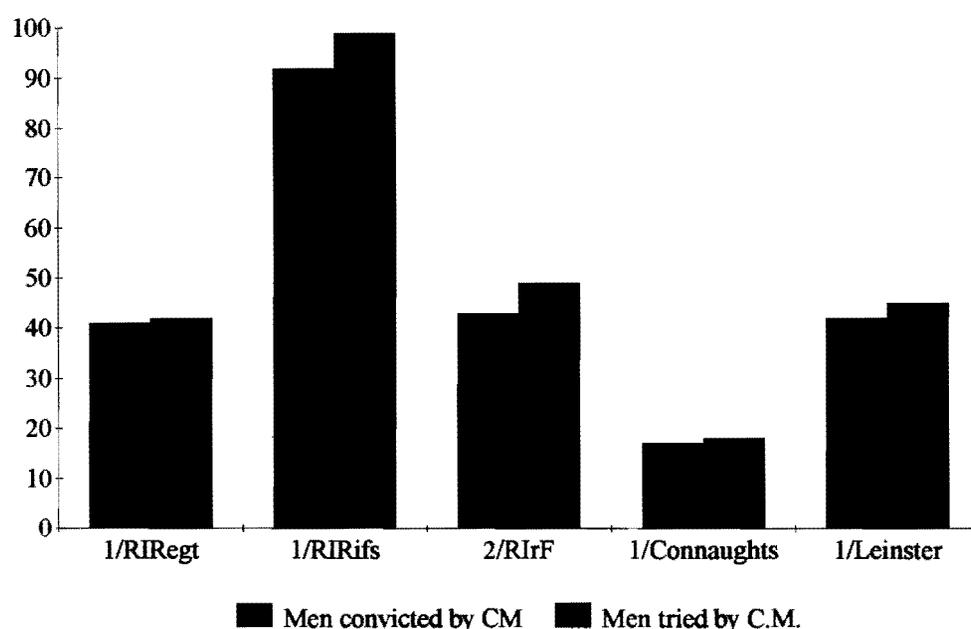
⁷T. Johnstone, Orange, Green and Khaki: The Story of the Irish Regiments in the Great War, 1914-18, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1992, p.75. It also appears that in some Dublin firms the outbreak of war saw a repeat of the lock out, as men were forced, by their employers, to join the British army. See, P. Murray, "The First World War and a Dublin Distillery Workforce: Recruiting and Redundancy at John Power & Son, 1915-1917", Saothar, 15, 1990, p.50.

⁸See, J. F. Lucy, There's a Devil in the Drum, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1938, pp.13 and 43, and H. V. Gill, "As seen by a Chaplain with the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles", unpublished manuscript, Jesuit Archives, Dublin, p.7. Perry notes that in 1914, just 44% of men in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles came from the regimental recruiting area of Belfast, Antrim and Down, N. Perry, "Nationality in the Irish Infantry Regiments in the First World War", War and Society, 12, 1, 1994, p.68.

with a court martial record almost similar to the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers had only 351 deaths; one of the lowest for Irish units on the Western Front.⁹

If we consider the numbers of men in Irish units serving overseas on the outbreak of war who were court martialled while the unit was serving in France, disparities are equally clear, as shown in graph 3.2.

Table 3.2. Men tried by court martial on the Western Front, while serving in Irish units returned from overseas service.¹⁰



The only proviso which should be added to this chart regards the 1st. Battalion, Connaught Rangers. It would seem clear that a number of British troops attached to the Indian Army Corps were tried under the Indian Army Act. Thus, it is

⁹I would like to thank Mr. Nicholas Perry for providing me with these figures for deaths in the Irish units during 1914 and 1915. It should be noted that, while the courts martial record has been calculated from the units arrival in France until 30th. September 1915, the total number of deaths per unit was calculated from the units arrival in France until 31st. December 1915.

¹⁰The number of courts martial cases are calculated from the date of the battalions arrival in France, until 30th. September 1915.

likely that some men of the Connaught Rangers were tried under this system, from which an individual battalion breakdown is not available.¹¹

While it would appear that the High Command based their assessment of a unit's disciplinary state on the number of courts martial held in it, it is important to consider the offences for which men were tried by courts martial in some detail. (See table 3.3 overleaf).

It is clear from table 3.3 that, for British units in general, as well as Irish units more specifically, the major courts martial offence committed by men during this period was drunkenness. As Brent Wilson points out; "Of course, most drunkenness occurred in the rearward areas or during open warfare, drunkenness at the front was uncommon."¹² Therefore, drunkenness rarely impeded the combat effectiveness of a unit, although there were notable exceptions to this. For example, following a particularly raucous St. Patrick's Day in 1915, men of the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers were unable to dig new communications trenches, due to widespread drunkenness in the unit.¹³

Drunkenness, in disciplinary terms, was much more serious in that it demonstrated the incapacity of some N.C.O.s to adequately carry out their duties. Lieutenant Hitchcock of the 2nd. Battalion, The Leinster Regiment noted that on the 12th. August 1915;

At 'Stand to' an issue of rum, which had been sent up under cover of darkness, was dished out, and was thoroughly appreciated. Serg[ean]t. Shields, Piper's platoon sergeant, who was somewhat ancient and had felt the

¹¹ Deputy Judge Advocate General, Indian Corps, War Diaries, P.R.O., WO154/15 and WO154/16.

¹²J. Brent Wilson, "The Morale and Discipline of the B.E.F.", p.57.

¹³War diary of 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, entry for 18/3/15, P.R.O., WO95/1482.

Table 3.3. Offences for which men serving in sample units on the Western Front were tried by Courts Martial, from the unit's arrival in France to 30th. September 1915.

	1/r. Grds.	1/RIRegt.	2/RIRegt.	2/RInnsF.	1/RIRifs.	2/RIRifs.	1/RIrF.	2/RIrF.	1/CR.	2/CR.	1/Leins.	2/Leins.	2/RMF.	2/RDF.	4RIDG.	6InnsD.	8KRIF.	5Lancers	NIH.	SIH.	TOTAL	1/Glous.	British Army, F.G.C.M., overseas, 4/8/14 to 30/9/15.	
War Treason	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
D.O.R.A.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Offence against an inhabitant	3	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	134
Mutiny	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Cowardice	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	0	96
Desertion	3	0	1	21	14	3	2	3	0	0	4	5	1	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	71	0	381
Absence	3	0	0	1	0	1	4	0	3	8	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	0	2581
Striking or violent	2	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	3	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	573
Insubordination	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	4	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	1	1105
Disobedience	3	3	2	2	4	5	1	2	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	29	0	950
Quitting post	3	1	4	1	9	2	2	1	0	1	0	6	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	34	1	1455
Drunkenness	32	15	30	36	17	36	25	18	6	10	10	46	31	83	9	5	10	12	7	1	439	5	6214	
Injuring property	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
Loss of property	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	159
Theft	1	1	1	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	4	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	17	0	285
Indecency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
Resisting escort	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	196
Escaping confinement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	211
Miscellaneous and multiple military offences	16	21	23	31	50	64	26	25	7	5	29	72	13	46	22	15	2	20	3	3	493	10	1846	
Miscellaneous civil offences	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	81
Self-inflicted wound	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	34
Fraudulent enlistment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Enlisting after discharge	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
False answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Neglect	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fraud	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
TOTALS	69	42	63	94	99	119	64	49	18	30	45	145	51	150	34	23	14	36	10	4	1159	19	16334	

strain of the day more than younger men, took a double ration, and started firing up at the stars and shouting out about the Battle of Colenso!¹⁴

Captain Burgoyne, commanding "C" company of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles was determined to prevent drunkenness in his unit, particularly after the events of the 27th. December 1914, when one of his sergeants was shot while issuing the rum ration. Burgoyne, with the endorsement of his C.O. and Divisional G.O.C., ceased issuing rum to his company following this incident.¹⁵ However, in February 1915, when, following the distribution of pay, a number of N.C.O.s in his company became inebriated, Burgoyne felt unable to take disciplinary action; "No use running them up before the C.O.; they'd be tried by court martial, and I couldn't get other men to take their places."¹⁶

Table 3.3 suggests that disciplinary offences in the Irish regiments during this period were broadly in line with those of the British army as a whole. However, exact estimates are difficult, given the fluctuating strength of the B.E.F. from August 1914 to September 1915. T. Johnstone suggests that just over one-fifth of the original B.E.F. was Irish.¹⁷ However, by September 1915, it is likely that the proportion was under five percent. This makes comparisons between the Irish regiments and the B.E.F. as a whole, very difficult. Nevertheless it would appear that desertion and miscellaneous offences¹⁸ were a particular problem in the Irish regiments, while offences against inhabitants and insubordination were comparatively infrequent, in comparison to the general British figures. However, the figures for the two non-Irish

¹⁴F. C. Hitchcock, *"Stand To", A Diary of the Trenches, 1915-18*, Gliddon Books, London, 1988, p. 70.

¹⁵C. Davison, (ed.), *The Burgoyne Diaries*, Thomas Harmsworth Publishing, London, 1985, p. 34.

¹⁶*ibid*, pp. 122-3.

¹⁷T. Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki*, p. 6.

¹⁸In compiling these tables from the database multiple offences were included under the heading "miscellaneous offences". It is possible that the official figures, quoted in the annual army report categorised multiple offences, simply under the most serious offence committed.

units considered in this period, the 1st. Battalion, The Gloucester Regiment and the 1/14th. Battalion, London (Scottish) Regiment¹⁹, with nineteen and zero men tried respectively by courts martial, suggest that Irish regiments had more disciplinary cases than their English counterparts.

There are other indications that Irish discipline was considered to be much worse than that of other British units. In January 1915 Major General Alymer Haldane visited the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles to, “give them hell” as they were the; “bad boy” of his division.²⁰ Meanwhile, when commenting, in February 1915, on the death sentence passed on Private Thomas Hope of the 2nd. Battalion, The Leinster Regiment, General Sir Horace Smith Dorrien, G.O.C., Second Army noted; “The Brigade discipline is 2nd. worst + the Batt[allio]n. discipline also the 2nd. worst in the army.”²¹ The 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, in September 1915 was also deemed to have an unsatisfactory disciplinary record, although it was seen to be improving by this date.²²

Men, or at least officers, in the Irish regiments, were aware of their poor disciplinary records. At least one officer subscribed to a conspiracy theory over this issue. Father McCrory, the chaplain to the 2nd. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, believed that there was a general anti-Irish feeling in the army, which led to harsher punishments for Irish troops.²³ At the other extreme, portraying a deeply paternalistic interpretation, Brigadier General W. Carden Roe, who served as a Lieutenant in the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers during the Great War commented;

¹⁹As no men in the 1/14th. London (Scottish) Regiment were tried by court martial in this period, the unit was not included in tables 3.3.

²⁰C. Davison, (ed.), *The Burgoyne Diaries*, p.43.

²¹Transcript of Private Thomas Hope’s court martial, P.R.O., WO71/432.

²²Comments of Brigadier General P. R. Stephens, commanding 25th. Infantry Brigade, transcript of Lance-Corporal Peter Sands’s court martial, P.R.O., WO71/432.

²³Diaries of Father McCrory, P.R.O.N.I., D.1868/1, p.34.

The Irish soldier is undoubtedly a pleasant fellow to deal with. He gives a certain amount of trouble at times, but there is no malice behind it: it rather resembles the behaviour of a naughty child.²⁴

The comparatively small number of courts martial in Irish cavalry, as opposed to Irish infantry units, also deserves consideration. The small number of men tried in the North Irish Horse and South Irish Horse can be explained by the fact that neither of these units was at full strength during this period. Only two squadrons of the North Irish Horse and one of the South Irish Horse were serving in France during August 1914 to September 1915. The small number of men tried in these units, and in the 1/14th. Battalion, The London (Scottish) Regiment, may also be explicable by an unwillingness on the part of the military authorities to try part time soldiers, with the same rigour as their regular counterparts.²⁵ In general terms, it is not surprising that the number of courts martial carried out in Irish cavalry units generally compared favourably to those carried out in Irish infantry regiments, as the nominally "Irish" regular cavalry units were composed of largely non-Irish personnel.²⁶

Another possible explanation for the comparatively good courts martial record of the Irish cavalry regiments could be the better discipline seen in cavalry as opposed to infantry units in the B.E.F. in general. Reporting on his experiences with cavalry on the Western Front, J. E. B. Seely stated;

²⁴W. Carden Roe, "Memoirs of World War I", unpublished manuscript, I.W.M., 77/165/1, p.8. The comparatively small numbers of men serving in Irish units generally, and the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers in particular, tried for offences such as striking or violence to a superior, insubordination or disobedience appears to support Carden Roe's view.

²⁵The North and South Irish Horse were both Special Reserve units, while the 1/14th. Battalion, The London Regiment, was a unit of the Territorial Force.

²⁶As early as 1878 none of the "Irish" regular cavalry regiments had an Irish component in excess of thirty percent. See E. M. Spiers, "Army organisation and society in the nineteenth century", in T. Bartlett and K. Jeffrey, (eds.), *A Military History of Ireland*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p.337.

it has been the experience of both the French and the English Armies that the cavalryman in the trench is more valuable man for man than the infantryman. I have seen many French Generals and they all agree that this is so, the reason generally given being that the proportion of officers and Non Commissioned Officers with dismounted cavalry is much greater than in the case of infantry.²⁷

The initially high ratio of officers and N.C.O.s to men in cavalry units, combined with low casualty rates in comparison with front line infantry would seem to explain how discipline was better maintained in the cavalry units of the B.E.F.. Nevertheless, the disparities between Irish and non-Irish units courts martial records (and, indeed, between those of Irish battalions) in this period lack any simple explanation.²⁸

It will be noted that a number of offences, often regarded as important indicators of morale, notably self mutilation and suicide are almost absent from table 3.3. Suicides, it would appear, were largely concealed by battalion officers. Second Lieutenant Robert Graves, serving in the Royal Welch Fusiliers, claimed that he found a man of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers who had committed suicide, while inspecting the front line trenches;

Two Irish officers came up. 'We've had several of these lately', one of them told me. Then he said to the other: 'While I remember Callaghan, don't

²⁷Letter, Seely to Lord Kitchener, 21/1/15, P.R.O., PRO30/57/58.

²⁸The release of soldiers' personal records at the P.R.O. would now make possible a comparison between the conduct sheets of Irish and non-Irish units during 1914-18. It may, simply be the case that, in Irish regiments men were referred to courts martial after only a few offences had been dealt with by the unit's commanding officer, while in other British units, men were disciplined by their commanding officers and a court martial used as a last resort. The manner in which these records have been catalogued (by surname only) meant that any systematic study of sample units was beyond the time constraints placed on this thesis.

forget to write to his next-of-kin. Usual sort of letter, tell them he died a soldier's death, anything you like. I'm not going to report it as suicide.'²⁹

In the case of self-inflicted wounds, the situation is not as simple. Certainly, in some cases, the maiming itself was seen as punishment enough. As Sergeant A. T. Mathews of the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment recounted of an incident in late 1915;

One of the men - he did not belong to my platoon - said, 'I am fed up to the teeth, I'd blow my toes off if I had the guts to do it.' We were all terribly fed up but what was the use of giving way to our feelings. One of the other chaps said, 'If you haven't got the guts to do it, I'll do it for you', 'Right', he said, 'carry on and do it.' 'Put your foot against the side of the trench', and the chap who wanted his toes shot off did as he was bid. Up to this point we thought they were joking. Then there was a terrific bang as he fired at the foot. But his mate had not hit him in the toes but in the ankle and smashed it to smithereens, ..., The shooter was placed under arrest. They both got what they wanted - they got out of the line - one to undergo punishment and the other to be maimed for life. An act of cowardice? I would say it was.³⁰

However, even if we assume that a number of men who committed self mutilation were not tried by courts martial, this still leaves some serious discrepancies in the statistics. For example, Jeffrey Greenhut suggests, apparently with the evidence

²⁹R. Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, Penguin Books, London, 1969, p.89 and M. Staunton, "The Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Great War, 1914-19", unpublished M.A. thesis, University College, Dublin, p.32.

³⁰A. T. Mathews, "The Thin Khaki Line", unpublished manuscript, N.A.M., 6508-5, pp.16-17.

contained in the Acting Director of Medical Services' war diary³¹ that from the arrival of the Indian Corps in France in October 1914, until 14th. August 1915 there were 54 cases of hand wounds in the 1st. Battalion, Connaught Rangers.³² Greenhut's implication is that all of these wounds were self-inflicted, but that the information regarding self inflicted wounds was suppressed.³³

The Medical Officer of the 1st. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, who presumably would not have been involved in any "cover up", when sending in his casualty returns, recorded only one case of self inflicted wounds and one case of probable suicide for this period.³⁴ Equally, for the Indian Corps as a whole, the Deputy Judge Advocate General recorded just nine Indian and two British troops convicted for self mutilation or mutilation of a comrade, over the period that this corps was stationed in France.³⁵ This figure does appear very low, given Greenhut's figures of 1,808 Indian and 140 British troops in the Indian Corps suffering from hand wounds from October 1914 to 14th. August 1915.³⁶ However, one would assume that the Deputy Judge Advocate General kept precise figures on such matters, even if he did not pass them on to a higher authority.

The last issue with regard to self inflicted wounds, which should be considered is how the charge was made. It would seem possible that men suspected of this offence were simply tried under section 40 of the Army Act, which states; "Every person subject to military law who commits any of the following offences; that is to say, is guilty of any act, conduct, disorder, or neglect, to the prejudice of good order and military discipline."³⁷

³¹P.R.O., WO95/1093, entry for 4/11/14 and WO95/3917, appendix CLXVII.

³²J. Greenhut, "The Imperial Reserve: The Indian Corps on the Western Front, 1914-15", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 12, 1, 1983, p.57.

³³*ibid*, p.58.

³⁴See entries for 15/12/14 and 20/6/15 in War Diary of the Medical Officer, 1st. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, P.R.O., WO95/3923.

³⁵See War Diary of the Deputy Judge Advocate General, Indian Corps, P.R.O., WO154/15 and 16.

³⁶J. Greenhut, "The Imperial Reserve", p.57.

³⁷War Office, *Manual of Military Law*, H.M.S.O., London, 1914, p.412.

Section 40 is, therefore, something of a comprehensive charge without parallel in civil law. In cases involving other ranks, "S.40" is simply entered as a charge; however, in the more detailed officers' registers, a charge is also stated. This demonstrates that Section 40 was used to prosecute officers for a whole host of offences, from ownership of a camera to homosexual activities.³⁸ Thus, it would seem unlikely that all "S.40" cases related to self-mutilation, although a minority presumably did.

It is clear, from a comparison between tables 1.5 and 3.3, that there was a massive variation between peacetime and wartime offences. The first, and most obvious point is that the number of men tried by courts martial increased greatly in wartime. For example, while only 29 men of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers were tried by courts martial between 1st. August 1913 and 31st. July 1914, 150 were tried between the battalion's arrival in France in August 1914 and 30th. September 1915. Secondly, the disciplinary system itself showed different priorities. Fraudulent enlistment, seen as a serious matter in peacetime, became of considerably less importance in a war situation. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the difference between peacetime and wartime crimes was not a large one. Absence without leave, drunkenness and miscellaneous offences, all serious problems in Irish units on home service during 1913 to 1914, remained the major disciplinary offences committed by Irish troops in France during 1914 to 1915. Most noticeably some opportunities to commit crime, afforded by active service (for example the opportunity to commit offences against inhabitants) do not seem to have been exploited by many of the Irish or British soldiers serving in France during 1914 and 1915.

³⁸For an example of the former see the case of Temporary Lieutenant G. B. M. Reed, 14th. Company, Machine Gun Corps, tried, in the field on 10/4/17 for; "S.40 (ownership of a camera)", General Courts Martial Register, P.R.O., WO90/6, p.114. For the latter see the trial of Lieutenant H. Pope Hennessy, 49th. Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, tried on the 10/3/17 for; "S40 (getting into bed with a private soldier)". General Courts Martial Register, P.R.O., WO90/6, p.109.

A comparison between tables 1.6 and 3.4, overleaf, is also informative. As a general order to the army noted of the difference between peacetime and wartime discipline;

The Commander in Chief has had under consideration certain sentences recently awarded by Courts-Martial,..., He wishes to point out that certain offences which in peace time are adequately met by a small sentence, assume, on active service, a gravity which wholly alters their character. This principle is fully recognised in Military Law; for instance in the case of desertion, the Army Act in time of peace, permits a maximum sentence of two year's duration only, whereas on active service a Court is allowed to award a sentence of death for the same offence,..., The Commander in Chief wishes to impress upon all officers serving upon Courts-Martial that it is their duty to give weight to consideration of good character, inexperience and all other extenuating circumstances, but that, at the same time, they are seriously to consider the effect which the offence in question may have upon the discipline of the Army.³⁹

Therefore it is not surprising that the severity of many sentences increased during wartime. No British soldier had been executed since the Boer War (even when 37 men of the 13th. Hussars mutinied in India in 1911⁴⁰). However, from August 1914 to September 1915, 51 British, including four Irish, soldiers were executed.⁴¹ Penal servitude, a sentence awarded to no man serving in an Irish unit on home service during 1913 to 1914, was awarded to 55 men serving in Irish units in the B.E.F. from August 1914 to 30th. September 1915. Equally, the sentence of hard labour was used more frequently in wartime. Most noticeably of all, detention, the sentence awarded

³⁹General Routine Orders for 19/9/14; Adjutant General's War Diary, P.R.O., WO95/25.

⁴⁰General Courts Martial Register (India), P.R.O., WO90/7, pp.62-3.

⁴¹J. Putkowski and J. Sykes, Shot at Dawn, Executions in World War One by authority of the British Army Act, Leo Cooper, London, 1993, p.292.

Table 3.4. Sentences passed on men tried by Courts Martial while serving in sample units in France from the unit's arrival in France to 30th. September 1915.

	1/1r. Grds.	1/RIRegt.	2/RIRegt.	2/RIInnsF.	1/RI Rif.	2/RI Rif.	1/RIrF.	2/RIrF.	1/CR.	2/CR.	1/Leins.	2/Leins.	2/RMF.	2/RDF.	4RIDG.	6InnsD.	8KRiH.	5Lancers	NIH.	SIH.	TOTAL	1/Glous.
Death	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0
Penal Servitude	0	0	5	5	10	5	4	1	0	0	0	10	1	9	1	4	0	0	0	0	55	0
Hard Labour	8	5	15	19	12	19	14	6	5	9	8	26	16	31	20	4	1	9	2	0	229	1
Imprisonment	0	0	2	7	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	17	0
Detention	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Field Punishment 1	38	28	24	47	54	72	31	25	7	4	13	68	18	65	6	9	10	13	3	1	536	11
Field Punishment 2	4	2	0	2	2	3	4	1	2	1	2	4	4	3	0	2	1	1	0	0	38	0
Discharged with ignominy/cashiered	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Reduced or reprimanded	13	3	11	4	11	10	6	7	1	3	7	11	4	13	4	3	2	1	3	0	117	3
Stoppages, fines, etc.	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Quashed/not confirmed	0	0	2	0	3	7	1	4	0	8	3	0	4	21	2	1	0	4	0	0	60	0
Suspended sentence	0	3	2	7	3	0	2	3	1	0	12	4	1	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	43	1
Not guilty/acquitted/unable to prosecute/guilty but insane	2	1	2	3	3	3	1	2	1	2	0	18	3	3	1	0	0	7	2	2	56	3
TOTALS	69	42	63	94	99	119	64	49	18	30	45	145	51	150	34	23	14	36	10	4	1159	19

most frequently in peacetime, was not used at all in the first thirteen months of the war. In wartime field punishment replaced detention as the most frequently awarded sentence. As discussed in chapter 2, field punishment was an unpopular sentence, involving corporal punishment. However, from the point of view of the military authorities, it had the advantage that, while serving his sentence, a man could remain on active service with his unit.

However, it would be wrong to suggest that wartime saw the entire apparatus of military law become more repressive. The number of not guilty verdicts, at least in the Irish units used in this case study, increased from 2.8% in 1913-14 to 4.8% in 1914-15. Likewise, the number of sentences quashed increased from 1.4% in 1913-14 to 5.2% in 1914-15. This suggests that army officers themselves, sitting on courts martial, and the Judge Advocate General's office refused to sentence men, the charges against whom were poorly framed, simply because they were on active service. Also, the introduction of the Suspended Sentences Act meant that men who, previously, would have faced death or long terms of imprisonment, continued to serve with their units and, by future good behaviour or heroism in action, could have their sentence reduced or removed altogether.

It is now necessary in evaluating the discipline and morale of the B.E.F. as a whole, and the Irish units in particular, during the August 1914 to September 1915 period to examine three instances where discipline was under a severe strain. The first is the so-called "Colonels' Surrender" at St. Quentin in August 1914 when Lieutenant Colonel Mainwaring of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers and Lieutenant Colonel Elkington of the 1st. Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment proposed to surrender themselves and their men to the advancing German forces. The second is the "Christmas Truce" of 1914 and the general crisis of morale faced by the B.E.F. in Winter 1914/15. The last issue to be examined will be the formation of Sir Roger Casement's "Irish Brigade" from Irish prisoners of war, during 1914 and 1915.

The "Colonels' Surrender" at St. Quentin has already received considerable attention elsewhere.⁴² However, given the involvement of men of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers and 4th. Royal Irish Dragoon Guards in this affair and the fact that this was one of the few occasions on the Retreat from Mons when discipline did break down, it merits some attention.

On the 27th. August 1914 Lieutenant Colonels Mainwaring and Elkington promised the Mayor of St. Quentin that they would not fight in the town. If they could not evacuate their men before the arrival of the Germans they pledged to surrender.⁴³ This much is clear about the incident, however, the lack of primary accounts means that it is difficult to ascertain the Colonels' motivation in taking this course of action. Mainwaring apparently suggested that he faced a mutiny situation, with his men refusing to continue to retreat.⁴⁴ By contrast Captain Arthur Osburn, the medical officer of the 4th. Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, believed that the surrender was perfectly justified by the position in which the men found themselves. He stated;

To me it seems there was every excuse for the two colonels and the one or two pale exhausted-looking subalterns whom I had noticed mingling with the crowd down at the station. Without Staff, without maps or orders, without food, without ammunition, without support from artillery or cavalry, what could the remnants of broken infantry do before the advance of the victorious army, whose cavalry could have mopped them up in an hour? Probably, looking back on it now, the two colonels did almost the only thing feasible and the brave thing.⁴⁵

⁴²See especially, P. T. Scott, "Dishonoured"; The 'Colonels' Surrender' at St. Quentin, The Retreat from Mons, August 1914, Tom Donovan Publishing, London, 1994.

⁴³*ibid*, p.54.

⁴⁴A. E. Mainwaring, A Statement by A. E. Mainwaring, Privately published, N.D., cited, *ibid*, p.54.

⁴⁵A. Osburn, Unwilling Passenger, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1932, p.83.

The arrival of Major Tom Bridges, with a rearguard of the 4th. Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, averted the surrender. Bridges' account of the incident again highlights the near mutinous state of the troops involved;

Apparently a meeting was then held and the men refused to march on the ground that they had already surrendered and would only come away if a train was sent to take them. I therefore sent an ultimatum giving them half an hour's grace, during which time some carts would be provided for those who really could not walk, but letting them know that I would leave no British soldier alive in St. Quentin. Upon this they emerged from the station and gave no further trouble.⁴⁶

Accounts vary as to how Bridges did finally rally the men. Bridges himself suggested that it was partly by issuing threats, but also by the use of a hastily improvised musical band, which helped to raise the men's morale.⁴⁷ However, Osburn believed that some men of the 4th. Royal Irish Dragoon Guards may have shot a few of the most truculent stragglers.⁴⁸

With reference to the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, a few further points relating to this incident must be made. Firstly, Lieutenant Colonel Mainwaring was only actually commanding forty men of his battalion at St. Quentin. Major H. M. Shewan and Captains Clarke and Trigona successfully extricated the rest of the unit from German encirclement, albeit with heavy casualties.⁴⁹ Secondly, Mainwaring was the only member of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers to be tried by court martial following the "surrender", suggesting that the military authorities fully understood the pressures put on men during the Retreat from Mons. Lastly, and most

⁴⁶T. Bridges, *Alarms and Excursions; Reminiscencies of a Soldier*, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1938, p87.

⁴⁷*ibid*, p.87.

⁴⁸A. Osburn, *Unwilling Passenger*, p.83.

⁴⁹P. T. Scott, *"Dishonoured"; The Colonels' Surrender*, pp.49 and 60-68.

importantly, it must be stressed that this action was largely atypical of the actions of other Irish battalions during this period. Indeed, the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers and 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, were seen as highly successful rearguard units. The 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, in their action at Etreux were decimated, with only five officers and 196 other ranks surviving.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the battalion's action effectively prevented German pursuit of I Corps.⁵¹

The high regard shown for the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles for its rearguard action was outlined by the unit's chaplain, Father Henry Gill, who observed;

The Battalion had also the unique honour of being received by the Brigade at the close of their rearguard action during the Retreat from Mons by a special ovation. The road was spontaneously lined by troops from the other units who rushed out to shake hands with the officers and men.⁵²

The only other Irish unit over which any doubts concerning discipline and morale lay, in this period, was the 2nd. Battalion, Connaught Rangers. This unit was surrounded at Le Grand Fayt on the night of the 26/27th. August 1914 while serving as a rearguard. The regimental history suggests that most of the battalion escaped from the position, but that Lieutenant Colonel Abercrombie and a number of others were either captured or killed.⁵³ However, Father McCrory, the Battalion's chaplain stated that Abercrombie surrendered to German soldiers, leaving his men to their own devices.⁵⁴ Equally, Colonel (then Second Lieutenant) Seymour Jourdain, who served

⁵⁰S. McCance, *History of the Royal Munster Fusiliers, vol. II, From 1861 to 1922 (Disbandment)*, Gale and Polden Ltd., Aldershot, 1927, p.119 and H. S. Jervis, *The 2nd. Munsters in France*, Gale and Polden Ltd., Aldershot, 1922, p.8.

⁵¹H. S. Jervis, *The 2nd. Munsters*, p.12, T. Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki*, pp.27-34 and M. Staunton, "The Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Great War", p.26.

⁵²H. V. Gill, "As seen by a Chaplain", p.8.

⁵³H. F. N. Jourdain, *The Connaught Rangers*, vol. II, Royal United Services Institution, London, 1926, pp. 417-8.

⁵⁴Diaries of Father McCrory, P.R.O.N.I., D.1868/1, pp.12-13. McCrory states that the action took place at Louducies.

in the 3rd., 5th. and 6th. Battalions, Connaught Rangers during the Great War believed that; "The 2nd. Battalion had walked into Germany in 1914."⁵⁵ It seems that this may partially explain why the 1st. and 2nd. Battalions of the Connaught Rangers were amalgamated in December 1914, in what was the only permanent amalgamation of regular British battalions during the entire war, although this amalgamation is usually attributed solely to the regiment's recruiting problems.⁵⁶

A major "crisis of morale" for the B.E.F. during the Great War is believed by many historians to have occurred in the Winter of 1914/15. As J. Brent Wilson notes; "A study of the B.E.F. during the first winter is essentially a portrait of a shaken peacetime army attempting to cope with a war gone wrong."⁵⁷ However, table 3.5, overleaf, (for details of all battalions please see appendix 6) demonstrates that during the Winter of 1914/15, while morale throughout the B.E.F. may have been low, the disciplinary record was far from uniform.

This sample of men tried by courts martial in Irish units during 1914 and 1915 suggests that the disciplinary record is an extremely complex one, and certainly does not suggest that the B.E.F. was facing a "crisis of discipline" in Winter 1914/15. The 1st. Battalion, Irish Guards, 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment and 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers all had worse disciplinary records in the Summer months of 1915, than in Winter 1914/15. By contrast the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles had just over half of its total number of courts martial trials for this entire sixteen month period, conducted during December 1914 and January and February 1915. Lastly, it should be noted that the worst period, in terms of disciplinary offences, for the 2nd.

⁵⁵Oral interview with Colonel F. W. Seymour Jourdain, I.W.M., 11214/2.

⁵⁶H. F. N. Jourdain, *The Connaught Rangers*, vol.I, p.450. The only other amalgamation of regular units occurred when the 2nd. Battalions of the Royal Munster Fusiliers and Royal Dublin Fusiliers were temporarily amalgamated and known as the "Dubsters" following the battalions' heavy losses at Gallipoli. The 2nd. Battalion of the Connaught Rangers was only re-established after the war, when the 5th. Battalion became the 2nd., the only New Army battalion to become part of the Regular forces.

⁵⁷J. Brent Wilson, "The Morale and Discipline of the B.E.F.", p.67.

Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was November 1914, and some of the Battalion's worst disciplinary offences appear to have been resolved by the onset of Winter.

However, the point must also be made that the unofficial Christmas truces of 1914 were serious breaches of military discipline, although no soldier in the B.E.F. was actually court martialled for his actions in arranging or participating in these festivities.⁵⁸ Reactions to the truce varied in the Irish regiments, as indeed they did in the B.E.F. as a whole.

Table 3.5. The number of men tried by courts martial, per month in a sample number of Irish infantry units.

		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
1/IrGrds	1914								0	3	3	5	4
	1915	7	5	5	6	6	4	10	4	8	5	4	8
1/RIRegt.	1914								0	0	0	5	1
	1915	3	5	2	0	3	9	6	6	2	0	9	0
2/RI Rif.	1914								0	8	10	12	10
	1915	40	9	17	1	3	0	6	1	2	6	4	10
2/RDF	1914								0	8	32	15	7
	1915	15	5	5	6	0	4	14	19	20	5	3	9

Major Trefusis, the acting C.O. of the 1st. Battalion, Irish Guards noted in his diary for the 27th. December 1914;

I hear that on Christmas day in one part of the line, some Officers were invited by the Germans to come and have a drink. They went and asked the Germans to come back. They refused but two or three hours afterwards, they came over and were taken prisoners. So complications may arise, and we have been told not to hold any sort of Armistice, but I don't suppose any sensible man would.⁵⁹

⁵⁸On this issue see, M. Brown and S. Seaton, Christmas Truce, The Western Front, December 1914, Papermac, London, 1994.

⁵⁹The papers of Brigadier General The Hon. J. F. Trefusis, I.W.M., 82/30/1.

In sharp contrast, the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers were keen participants in the Christmas truce, and, as late as the 13th. January 1915, Captain Burrows noted, "No sniping, this has been the case since Christmas. Enemy seem to understand that we will not snipe them so long as they do not snipe us."⁶⁰

The 2nd. Battalion, Leinster Regiment took a more pragmatic view of the truce. While, on Christmas Eve, the battalion refused overtures from the Germans (even shooting to pieces Chinese lanterns raised over the German trenches), on Christmas Day men of "A", "B" and "C" companies fraternised with the Germans in no-mans' land. Meanwhile "D" company refused to co-operate in the truce, continued to snipe at German units opposite it and generally used the truce to strengthen their defences.⁶¹ Nevertheless, like the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, the 2nd. Battalion, Leinster Regiment maintained a truce until ordered to resume hostilities in mid-January 1915.⁶²

Table 3.6. Men tried by courts martial in Irish units not involved in the Christmas Truce of 1914.

Unit	Courts Martial to 31/12/14
1/Irish Guards	15
1/Royal Irish Regiment	6
2/Royal Irish Regiment	29
2/Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers	19
2/Royal Irish Rifles	40
2/Royal Irish Fusiliers	1
1/Connaught Rangers	11
2/Connaught Rangers	26
1/Leinster Regiment	4
2/Royal Munster Fusiliers	27

⁶⁰Entry for 13/1/15, Captain Burrows' diary, Royal Irish Fusiliers' Museum, Armagh.

⁶¹F. E. Whitton, *The History of the Prince of Wales' Leinster Regiment*, pp.77-8.

⁶²*ibid*, pp.142-3.

There is a reasonably clear link between Irish battalions' disciplinary records and their involvement in the Christmas truce. The 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles and 2nd. Battalion, Leinster Regiment, participated in the truce⁶³ and had, respectively, 62, 26, 35 and 62 men tried by courts martial from their arrival in France until the end of December 1914. Meanwhile, the numbers of men tried by courts martial in Irish units which did not participate in the truce were as shown in table 3.6 for the same period.

While there is no absolute link between poor discipline and participation in the Christmas truce, it is clear, from table 3.6, that units with good courts martial records were much less likely to participate in the armistice than units with bad or indifferent disciplinary records.

Political pressures were put on the discipline of Irish soldiers in the British army during 1914 and 1915 by the formation of Sir Roger Casement's "Irish Brigade". Casement had been in the U.S.A. when war broke out and travelled to Germany with the backing of Republican Irish-American groups. Initially his activities met with success; by the end of 1914 the German government had agreed to supply arms and ammunition to Irish Republicans, to recognise and support an independent Irish government and, lastly, to authorise the formation of an Irish Brigade in the German army.⁶⁴

Casement's "Brigade" was, of course, to be raised from Irish prisoners of war and firm reports of its existence did not reach M.I.5 until March 1916. However, it would seem appropriate to examine this brigade and its impact on Irish soldiers in this chapter as Casement's aim was to raise it from Irish regular soldiers, captured in 1914 and 1915.

⁶³M. Brown and S. Seaton, *The Christmas Truce*, pp.225-30.

⁶⁴The most comprehensive study of this unit is, A. Roth, " 'The German soldier is not tactful': Sir Roger Casement and the Irish Brigade in Germany during the First World War", *Irish Sword*, XIX, 78, 1995.

The package offered by Casement and the German authorities to Irish prisoners of war, prepared to join the Irish Brigade was a comprehensive and, indeed, a generous one. This was fully outlined in a circular distributed to prisoners at Limburg Camp on the 9th. May 1915, which stated;

Irishmen.

- 1) Here is a chance to fight for Ireland, you have fought for England your country's hereditary enemy, you have fought for Belgium in England's interest though it was no more to you than the Figi Islands.
- 2) Are you willing to fight for your country with a view to securing the national freedom of Ireland with the moral and material assistance of the German government an Irish Brigade is being formed.
- 3) The object of the Irish Brigade shall be to fight solely for the cause of Ireland and under no circumstances shall it be directed to any German end.
- 4) The Brigade shall be formed and fight under the Irish Flag alone, the men will wear a special distinctive Irish uniform and have only Irish officers.
- 5) The Brigade shall be clothed, fed and officially equipped with arms and ammunition by the German government and shall be stationed near Berlin and be treated as guests of the German government.
- 6) At the end of the war the German government undertakes to send each member of the Brigade who desires it to the U.S.A. with necessary means to land.

7) The Irishmen in America is [sic] collecting money for the Brigade, those men who do not join will be removed from Limburg and distributed among other Camps. If interested see your German company commander.

Join the Irish Brigade and win Ireland Independence.

Remember batchelors [sic.] walk.

GOD SAVE IRELAND⁶⁵

Despite these generous terms and conditions, Casement's so called "Irish Brigade" did not approach company strength, at its height consisting of only around 50 men.⁶⁶

This sluggish recruitment suggests that, even when removed from the threat of disciplinary action (and the only action that the British army could take against members of the "Irish Brigade" in Germany was to stop their pay and allowances to their families⁶⁷) and measures which would enhance their morale (the regimental system, comforts from home, etc.), most Irish soldiers continued in their loyalty to the crown. Indeed, many soldiers risked disciplinary action from the German authorities

⁶⁵An original of this pamphlet is enclosed with notes by Colonel Maurice Moore on the court martial of Private Dowling in July 1918, in COS 46, Cathal O'Shannon Papers, Irish Labour History Museum and Archives, Dublin.

⁶⁶K. Jeffery, "The Irish military tradition and the British Empire", in K. Jeffery (ed.), *"An Irish Empire?", Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1996, p.114. Evidence given to M.I.5 by repatriated P.O.W.s put the size of the Brigade at between 50 and 63 men, see "Formation of an 'Irish Bde.' among Prisoners of War in Germany", P.R.O., WO141/9. Roth states that the maximum size of the Brigade was 56 men, A. Roth, "The German soldier is not tactful": Sir Roger Casement and the Irish Brigade", pp.311-2.

⁶⁷In the case of Private M. O'Toole of the 1st. Battalion, Irish Guards, for example, a memo of 1/7/16 stated; "We think Mrs. O'Toole should be informed that her allowance is stopped because her husband has joined the German Irish Brigade. It is no use fencing with the question." P.R.O., WO141/9.

to show their opposition to the Brigade. When Irish P.O.W.s (excluding officers) were all moved to Limburg Camp, the senior N.C.O.s present sent a message to the camp commandant stating that, while they appreciated the better conditions as Limburg, they wanted no special treatment as; "in addition to being Irish Catholics, we have the honour to be British soldiers."⁶⁸ When he visited Limburg Camp in early 1915, Casement was poorly received and was manhandled by the P.O.W.s, greeted by cheers for John Redmond and taunted by shouts of; "how much are the Germans paying you?"⁶⁹ In addition to this, most of the Irish P.O.W.s were apparently put on a starvation diet, in an attempt to force them to join the Brigade.⁷⁰

The quantity of men recruited for the German Irish Brigade was thus very disappointing to both Casement and the German authorities. However, the men recruited by Casement were also not the proselytising Republicans he had hoped for. Wyndham Childs, commenting on the Brigade's personnel noted;

My own belief is that the Irishmen who joined it merely did so to get better treatment, and that none of them ever had the slightest intention of raising a hand against this country - anyhow, that is what they all said when they returned after the war.⁷¹

Childs' view does seem to be an accurate appraisal of the Brigade; even Casement had to admit that men had joined his unit for better treatment, rather than

⁶⁸B. Inglis, Roger Casement, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1973, pp.287-8.

⁶⁹*ibid*, p.289 and the evidence of Private Thomas Higgins, 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers and Private Andrew Duffy, R.A.M.C. in file entitled, "Sir R. Casement's visits to Limburg Camp", P.R.O., WO141/15.

⁷⁰Evidence of Private William Dooley, 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment and Private John Cronin, 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, P.R.O., WO141/9.

⁷¹B. E. W. Childs, Episodes and Reflections, Being Some Records from the Life of Major General Sir Wyndham Childs, Cassel and Co. Ltd., London, 1930, p.113.

out of any sense of Irish patriotism.⁷² Commenting on one of the men in the Brigade, Major Ivan Price, the Intelligence Officer at Irish Headquarters stated;

Pte. J. Daly before enlistment was continually an inmate of Ballina Workhouse. He was [an] idle, worthless fellow,..., There is no reason to suspect them of disloyalty, but owing to the depravity of character of these people they could if opportunity offered lend themselves to any condition of things which might arise.⁷³

The mercenary nature of the force is also demonstrated by the fact that one of its members, Timothy Quinless, acted as an informer to the British forces during the Anglo-Irish War, being executed by the I.R.A. following a bungled attempt to capture Michael Collins.⁷⁴ The presence of at least two men from English Regiments in the Brigade also suggests a “mercenary” incentive amongst its members.⁷⁵

Finally, the failure of Casement’s Brigade would appear to be confirmed by the treatment of its two members who were captured during the war. Sergeant Daniel Bailey, late of the Royal Irish Rifles, who accompanied Casement to Ireland in 1916 and was captured there⁷⁶ was; “re-instated on account of his previous good character

⁷²K. Jeffery, *“An Irish Empire”*, p.114.

⁷³Letter, 5/4/16, Major Price to Lieutenant Colonel V. G. W. Kell, M.I.5 G., War Office, P.R.O., WO141/9. Major Price had, on the outbreak of war, been an Inspector in the Royal Irish Constabulary and was seconded to the War Office with the rank of Major. It is therefore possible that he was writing with a personal knowledge of Daly. See, E. O’Halpin, *The Decline of the Union; British Government in Ireland, 1892-1920*, Gill and Macmillan Ltd., Dublin, 1987, p.250.

⁷⁴L. Ó Broin, *Michael Collins*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1991, p.54.

⁷⁵Letter from P.O.W. Department to M.I.5(?), 27/2/17, lists Lance Corporal H. P. Delamore of the Bedfordshire Regiment and Private D. Golden of the Somerset Light Infantry as members of the Brigade, P.R.O., WO141/9. It is, of course, possible that these were Irishmen who had opted to join English regiments.

⁷⁶M. Caulfield, *The Easter Rebellion*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1995, p.33.

in the Army, and not as some people believe, because he gave, or offered to give King's evidence against Casement."⁷⁷

Private Joseph Dowling, another member of the German Irish Brigade was captured in Galway in May 1918, having been landed from a U-Boat to ascertain if another rising was possible.⁷⁸ Dowling was tried by a General Court Martial held in the Guildhall, Westminster on the 8th. July 1918. He was sentenced to penal servitude for life and in, 1923, when the British government had already released the men involved in the 1920 Connaught Rangers mutiny, recognising them as "political prisoners", Dowling was still an inmate of Wandsworth prison.⁷⁹

The sentence passed on Dowling raises two key issues. Firstly, Dowling, who could, quite easily have been executed by the British authorities for treason, received a more lenient sentence. This suggests that the German-Irish Brigade's threat was not seen as a serious one; either in fomenting rebellion in Ireland or of undermining the loyalty of Irish soldiers serving in the British army.

Secondly, the refusal to release him as a "political prisoner" suggests both that the British government saw his motives as inspired by personal financial gain, rather than political motives, and that the Irish Free State government was unwilling to petition for his release, as this would, retrospectively, appear to endorse his actions. Ironically, it was Colonel Maurice Moore, a former officer of the Connaught Rangers (in which Dowling had also served) and member of the Irish Free State Senate, rather than Dail ministers, who was most vocal in an attempt to gain Dowling's release.

Therefore, it would appear that Casement's Irish Brigade was largely viewed as an irrelevance by British senior officers and politicians. Indeed, after Casement's execution, the unit became something of an embarrassment to the German government

⁷⁷Notes by Colonel Maurice Moore, in COS46, Cathal O'Shannon Papers, Irish Labour History Museum and Archives, Dublin.

⁷⁸F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, p.396.

⁷⁹All details of Dowling's case were taken from the Art O'Brien papers, National Library of Ireland, Ms.8456. This collection includes a transcript of his court martial and details on the campaign for Dowling's release.

and, despite plans to move it to Egypt, spent the rest of the war near Berlin.⁸⁰ Post war, no action was taken by the British government against men who had served in the unit.

The experience of Casement's Irish Brigade demonstrates that the concept of a crisis of morale, or indeed, of discipline, in the 1914/15 period, at least in the Irish regiments, can be overstated. Nevertheless, this period did see serious problems in the morale of the B.E.F.. Regular soldiers, as discussed in chapter one, expected a short war, and when the Great War settled into stalemate, serious weaknesses in the British army were revealed. The supply of replacement officers and other ranks on such a large scale had never been envisaged with the result that units were frequently under-strength and composed, at least partially, of poorly trained men. Equally, many of the essentials of trench warfare, such as grenades, trench mortars, machine guns and heavy artillery, which the Germans appeared to have in abundance were conspicuous by their absence in the B.E.F..

Losses obviously effected different units at different times during the first fourteen months of the war and battalions showed different propensities to maintain their regular character. Second Lieutenant Hitchcock, joining the 2nd. Battalion, The Leinster Regiment, in May 1915, commented;

My platoon paraded in the trench for rifle inspection. They were a fine body of men; the majority hailed from Tipperary, King's and Queen's Counties and Westmeath and were time serving soldiers,..., There was a splendid esprit de corps throughout the Battalion.⁸¹

⁸⁰B. Inglis, *Roger Casement*, p.296.

⁸¹F. C. Hitchcock, *"Stand To", A Diary of the Trenches, 1915-18*, Gliddon Books, London, 1988, pp.25-6. The recruiting area of the Leinster Regiment was Counties Longford, Meath and Westmeath and King's and Queen's Counties.

Other units were less fortunate, Captain Burgoyne, in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, commented about his unit in April 1915; “an Irish Militia Regiment, and that is all we are now, for the class of man we have in it now is a class which would not be accepted for the regular Army.”⁸² However, by May, the situation was not quite as desperate; Burgoyne commented;

since last February our drafts have been improving both in quality and training, and we’ve got rid of our wasters, and I had some 155 quite useful lads under me; a small company, but quite good; none better in Flanders outside the guards.⁸³

These observations suggest that, in some respects, the disciplinary record of regiments is not, necessarily, a good guide to their morale. The courts martial record of the 2nd. Battalion, Leinster Regiment was much worse than that in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that the Rifles had suffered higher losses and was made up to strength with what were, in many cases, poorly trained drafts.

The poor quality of replacements sent out to Irish units, even in the very early stages of the war, was frequently commented on. The Medical Officer of the 1st. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, reported a number of serious problems in that unit. Some of the men were over fifty years of age and were thus too old for work in the trenches.⁸⁴ Others had no teeth and found it impossible to eat ration biscuits.⁸⁵ Worse still, from a medical point of view, Lieutenant Colonel Loveband of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers noted, in October 1914, that;

⁸²C. Davison (ed.), *The Burgoyne Diaries*, p.172.

⁸³*ibid.*, p.210.

⁸⁴War diary of the Medical Officer, 1st. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, P.R.O., WO95/3923, entries for 6/12/14 and 26/7/15. No such diary survives relating to any other Irish unit.

⁸⁵*ibid.*, entries for 14/5/15 and 1/6/15.

Several cases of crabs have occurred recently amongst the men of this Battalion. On investigation it was found that most of the cases were men of the last reinforcement. I suggest that a careful medical examination should be made of all drafts before they leave the overseas base and all suspected case[s] be kept back as owing to the insanitary life men are forced to lead when in trenches any disease of this nature spreads with great rapidity.⁸⁶

The 1st. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, may be an extreme example in regard to poor quality drafts, given their serious recruiting problems. However, in other units there were also problems of men being over-age and/or poorly trained for front line service. Burgoyne, commenting on his company of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, in December 1914 noted;

One of my beauties had the following conversation with Kearns (a second lieutenant), 'Sure, Sir, I'm over 50, haven't I done over 30 years service Sir, and sure Sir I don't know how to fix the sights of this rifle, I who haven't seen a gun for 15 years!!!' And we found another man who didn't know how to work his rifle. Useful sort to send out to us!⁸⁷

Service with such men can have done little to raise the morale of other ranks in this period. However, some men felt that they had more concrete grievances against the army's drafting policy. Private A. R. Brennan, drafted to the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment in July 1915 commented;

⁸⁶Appendix I, to October 1914 entries in the war diary of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, P.R.O., WO95/1481.

⁸⁷C. Davison (ed.), *The Burgoyne Diaries*, p.39.

In barracks in Dublin we had occupied quarters apart from the other companies (of the 3rd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment) and we had an idea that this practice would be followed even in France. On arrival at Acheux, however, our Company was broken up and we were drafted to different Companies. I suppose this was inevitable, but we were new to the Army then and some of us thought that it was a breach of faith.⁸⁸

Brennan, who had served in the "Cadet Corps" of the 3rd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment was shocked both to be separated from the men he had trained with and to serve with ordinary working class soldiers.⁸⁹

Equally, some army reservists, who had been away from "colour service" for up to seven years, found rejoining the army, and especially, serving under younger N.C.O.s unsatisfactory. John Lucy, then a Lance Corporal in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles noted; "Of my eight men four were reservists, older men who were not so easy to command as the serving regulars. They grouched rather too much and offered gratuitous advice on soldiering."⁹⁰ It also seems likely that men, whose colour service was due to come to an end in late 1914 were not happy with being forced to stay on in the army for another year, although little direct evidence relating to this group of men has come to light.⁹¹ Lastly, in terms of drafts it should be noted that

⁸⁸Entry for 1/8/15, First World War diary of Private A. R. Brennan, I.W.M., P.262.

⁸⁹Despite its title and attempt to recruit middle class men into the army, this Cadet Corps never became an Officer Training unit, although there is some evidence that it had been designed for this purpose. It was also referred to as a "Pals" unit, a rather strange situation given that, as a draft finding unit, the 3rd. Battalion Royal Irish Regiment could not make the guarantee of joint service, implicit in the entire "Pals" concept.

⁹⁰J. F. Lucy, *There's a Devil in the Drum*, p.80.

⁹¹One soldier, due to enter the reserve in late 1914, Lance Corporal S. Wilkes of the Monmouthshire Regiment noted; "After being in India some seven years I was expecting to come home in the October as the war broke out in the August previous well of course I knew that I should not be allowed to go away into civilian life and I can assure you that I was very upset as I had been preparing for the last 12 months of my service thinking to myself 'put a little away for a rainy day'." Manuscript entitled, "A Touch of Memory", I.W.M., Misc.163, item 2508.

some men had minimal training before being drafted to France. For example, Private Michael Irwin joined the 4th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers on 9th. November 1914 and arrived, as a draft, with the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers on the 4th. January 1915.⁹²

Rather less needs to be said regarding the inferiority of the B.E.F. equipment during this initial period of the war. Most soldiers were painfully aware that devices, unknown in the pre-war British army, such as hand grenades and trench mortars, were plentiful in the German forces. Even worse than this, in their effect on morale, were some of the improvised weapons produced in the B.E.F. during this period. When, on the 17th. December 1914, the 1st. Battalion, Connaught Rangers relieved the 1st. Battalion, Manchester Regiment in the front line;

A trench-mortar was taken over in these trenches and used with some success until December 19th., on which day it burst, killing Private Murray, the man working it. The first weapons of the type used in the British Army, the barrels being made of wooden battens frapped round with wire or metal hoops, had been constructed just three weeks previously, originating in the Indian Division. The enemy opposite were at this time using minenwerfers against the Rangers' trenches, but with indifferent success.⁹³

Having examined the disciplinary record and some problems in the B.E.F. which may have engendered low morale, in the final section of this chapter issues which helped to maintain morale during the August 1914 to September 1915 period will be briefly considered. Thus the importance of, news from other theatres of war, dignitaries visits, the goods received from comforts funds and individuals, organised

⁹²M. Staunton, "The Royal Munster Fusiliers", p.30. It would appear that this was not an isolated incident, see entry for the 26/4/15 regarding the poor standard of proficiency in musketry in the war diary of the 2nd. Battalion, Leinster Regiment, P.R.O., WO95/1612.

⁹³H. F. N. Jourdain, The Connaught Rangers, vol.I, pp.451-2.

sports, the regimental system, religion and patriotic feelings in raising morale will be assessed.

News of events on other fronts was heavily censored, both by the British and foreign governments. Nevertheless, there are a number of suggestions that British soldiers felt that the situation on the Russian front was much more positive for the allies and that, if they could only maintain a holding action in France, then a decisive victory could be achieved in the East. For example, the war diary of the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers for the 1st. November 1914 recorded; "good news was received from the Eastern theatre, which had a good effect on all ranks."⁹⁴

Irish units on the Western Front received a bewildering array of visitors, both civilian and military during this initial phase of the war. Field Marshal Lord Roberts was an early visitor to the 2nd. Battalion, Leinster Regiment in November 1914, although, perhaps not surprisingly given his stand over the Home Rule issue, his welcome does not appear to have been effusive.⁹⁵

Political visitors to the Irish regiments did not arrive until much later. On the 1st. September 1915, Second Lieutenant Hitchcock of the 2nd. Battalion, Leinster Regiment noted;

'The O'Mahoney' came to visit us with some members of the Irish League, who were visiting the Front. He gave us a long speech about Ireland, and congratulated the C.O. on having such a fine Battalion with such an excellent fighting record. The men cheered him like blazes, as they had a second payment that morning, and had spent some time in an estaminet hard by!⁹⁶

⁹⁴War diary of the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, P.R.O., WO95/1482. Also on this theme see; letters from Captain F. W. Filgate, 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers to Mrs. Nightingale, 4/3/15 and 13/4/15, Major Guy Nightingale papers, P.R.O., PRO30/71/3 and letter from Captain J. A. T. Rice, 5th. Royal Irish Lancers, to his mother, 26/3/15, N.A.M. 7511-80-68.

⁹⁵F. E. Whitton, *The History of the Prince of Wales' Leinster Regiment*, vol.II, p.73.

⁹⁶F. C. Hitchcock, "Stand to", *A Diary of the Trenches*, p.86. The United Irish

From the religious community, Cardinal Bourne visited the 1st. Battalion, Irish Guards and the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment in January 1915.⁹⁷ It is somewhat unclear what effect these visits and, of course, many more like them by Divisional or Corps Commanders, had on other ranks. Politicians' visits to units were normally sneered at, as in the case of Hitchcock's comments above, as the politicians were mostly Nationalist and the officers Unionist in political allegiance. However, Sergeant A. T. Mathews noted that the men of the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment derived much humour from faked visits of David Lloyd George to their lines. As he noted, one of the men in his company, nick-named "Kaffir" Smith;

always carried a top-hat with him - he treated it as a kind of mascot, he had found it in some French village. It had as many holes in it as a pepper box, and the reason for this was that we would have a lark with Jerry - so all one night we kept shouting across to them that Lloyd George- who always wore a silk hat - would be visiting the trenches next day. During the morning following 'Kaffir' got his top hat and stuck it on a long stick and walked slowly along the trench with just half the hat showing above it, so the Germans could see it, I don't know if the German soldiers really thought it was Lloyd George, all I do know is that they fairly peppered the hat with rifle and machine gun fire, as 'Kaffir' walked slowly on his way. When Jerry started shelling us well we thought it was time to tell 'Kaffir' to pack up and go somewhere else with his topper.⁹⁸

League was somewhat similar to a constituency association for the Irish Parliamentary Party, see F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine*, p.261.

⁹⁷ Diary entry for 28/1/15 in Brigadier General The Hon. J. F. Trefusis' First World War diary, I.W.M., 82/30/1 and entry for 26/1/15 in the war diary of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, P.R.O., WO95/14215.

⁹⁸Sgt. A. T. Mathews, "The Thin Khaki Line", unpublished manuscript, N.A.M., 6508-5, pp.22-3.

Another boost to morale was provided by gifts sent to the soldiers by various comfort funds and individuals. Perhaps the most famous gifts were those provided to each man in the B.E.F. for Christmas 1914 from the Princess Mary fund. This was of particular importance to Irish units as Private T. Duffy of the 2nd. Battalion, Leinster Regiment received the box personally packed by Princess Mary, while Private J. Fitzgerald of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers received the one packed by the Queen.⁹⁹

Other, more localised comforts funds, also operated in this period. By late October 1914 a comforts fund, established by the wife of Lieutenant Colonel Churcher of the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, and operating in the Armagh area, had already dispatched forty, eleven pound packages to the Battalion. These packages included electric torches, tobacco and daily newspapers.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, in March 1915 the 1st. Battalion, Connaught Rangers received an ambulance from "The People of Galway".¹⁰¹

At a lower level, individuals sent out gifts for the troops. Mrs. Nightingale, whose son was serving in the 1st. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, sent out razors to men in the 2nd. Battalion, in France.¹⁰² The same Battalion also received Irish War Pipes from John Redmond, M.P.¹⁰³ and a green flag with the Irish harp and word 'Munster' embroidered on it from Lady Gordon.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile, by March 1915, "D" company of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles had received a football from the employees of Mackie and Sons Foundry, Belfast.¹⁰⁵ Equally, as G. D. Sheffield notes,

⁹⁹War diary of the Quarter Master General's branch, P.R.O., WO95/27, entry for 25/12/14.

¹⁰⁰*Armagh Guardian*, 23/10/14, extract in folder entitled "War Cuttings 1914", Royal Irish Fusiliers Museum, Armagh.

¹⁰¹Entry for 19/3/15, war diary of the 1st. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, P.R.O., WO95/3923.

¹⁰²Letter, 4/3/15, Captain F. W. Filgate, 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, to Mrs. Nightingale, Major Guy Nightingale papers, P.R.O., PRO30/71/3.

¹⁰³same to same, 30/5/15, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴H. S. Jervis, *The 2nd. Munsters in France*, p.18.

¹⁰⁵C. Davison (ed.), *The Burgoyne Diaries*, p.143.

many officers directly obtained gifts for their men.¹⁰⁶ One such officer was Lieutenant J. A. T. Price, who obtained cigarettes, footballs and clothing for men in his troop.¹⁰⁷

The army High Command itself also took measures to improve morale. The most important institutions developed in this way were Divisional baths, concert parties and the establishment of canteens (often run by the Young Men's Christian Association).¹⁰⁸ At the battalion level, officers generally relied on tried and trusted methods to maintain morale. While St. Patrick's Day would, if possible, be a rest day, with, perhaps extra foodstuffs, some battalions also celebrated their own regimental days in such a fashion. For example, the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers celebrated Barrosa Day on the 5th. March 1915 with an extra dinner for other ranks and officers.¹⁰⁹ However, much more common were a wide variety of battalion, brigade and divisional sports, ranging from football to polo.¹¹⁰

Lastly, some Irish units built up very strong relationships with other units in the B.E.F.. Father Henry Gill, serving as the chaplain of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles noted;

There was a warm friendship between the R.[oyal] I.[rish] R.[ifles] and the H.[onourable] A.[rtillery] C.[ompany]. They were recruited from classes about as far apart as possible, but there were two bonds of sympathy between

¹⁰⁶G. D. Sheffield, "Officer-Man Relations; Morale and Discipline in the British Army, 1902-22", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London University, 1994, p.186.

¹⁰⁷Letter, J. A. T. Price to his mother, 10/10/14 and to his father, 3/11/14, N.A.M., 7511-80/15 and 20.

¹⁰⁸On these issues, see, J. G. Fuller, Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914-18, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990, especially pp.94-110 on concert parties.

¹⁰⁹Entry for 5-6/3/15 in war diary of the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, P.R.O., WO95/1482.

¹¹⁰See, for example, letter, Lieutenant J. A. T. Rice, 5th. Royal Irish Lancers, to his Father, 22/7/15, N.A.M., 7511-80-109 (on polo), entries for 6-7/12/14 in the war diary of the 4th. Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, P.R.O., WO95/1112 (on football) and entries for the 11-20/6/15 in the war diary of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, P.R.O., WO95/1279 (on relay races and boxing tournaments).

them, both were made up of sportsmen and both had the instincts of gentlemen.¹¹¹

The 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers built up a similar relationship with the 28th. Battalion, London Regiment (Artists' Rifles).¹¹² These relationships not only boosted morale in all units concerned, but also enabled experienced soldiers of these Irish battalions to pass on advice to the territorial soldiers in an informal setting.¹¹³

As Hew Strachan notes; "Logically, the experience of the First World War should have destroyed the regimental system. The mechanics of the Cardwell/Childers arrangements were redundant in 1914-18."¹¹⁴ A mixture of poor recruiting during the war and a regimental structure which had failed to keep pace with demographic changes in Ireland since the 1880s¹¹⁵ meant that from a very early stage in the war the Regimental structure of the Irish regiments virtually collapsed. The bitter truth was that, while Cardwell's system of localisation (completed by 1881) had aimed to increase rural recruiting,¹¹⁶ almost one-half of all recruits in Ireland in 1913 came from the Belfast and Dublin recruiting areas.¹¹⁷ This meant that, as early as 1910, the

¹¹¹H. V. Gill, "As seen by a Chaplain", p.23.

¹¹²Entry for 16/3/15 in the war diary of 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, P.R.O., WO95/1482 and entries for 26-29/2/15, Captain Penrose's diary, P.R.O.N.I., D.3574/E/6/8.

¹¹³Men serving in the Irish units seem to have had little prejudice against members of the Territorial Force or New Armies. Private Harold J. Hayward of the 12th. Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment, when under instruction from the 1st. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, noted that they were; "a very good sort, very willing." However, commenting on the class differences between the two units he continued; "we would perhaps never have met them in civil life." Taped interview with H. J. Hayward, I.W.M. sound archive, 9422/5.

¹¹⁴H. Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997, p.208.

¹¹⁵See N. Perry, "Nationality in the Irish Infantry Regiments", for an overview of Irish recruiting problems 1914-18.

¹¹⁶E. M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1902*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1992, p.21.

¹¹⁷Of 2,655 men recruited in Ireland in 1913, 832 were from the Dublin and 380 from the Belfast recruiting areas. J. V. O'Brien, "Dear, Dirty Dublin", *A City in Distress, 1899-1916*, University of California Press Ltd., London, 1982, p.245.

3rd. Battalion, Connaught Rangers was permitted to recruit in number 12 (The Suffolk Regiment's) and number 102 (The Royal Dublin Fusiliers') regimental areas.¹¹⁸

With the outbreak of war and high losses in the initial stages, the drafting system in Irish regiments started to collapse and a system, not dissimilar to the pre 1868 depot organisation, emerged, by which Irish recruits were simply sent to whatever Irish unit required them. In November 1914, for example, three officers of the Royal Munster Fusiliers, five of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, one of the Connaught Rangers and one of the North Staffordshire Regiment arrived for duty with the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment.¹¹⁹ Likewise, by April 1915, officers from Special Reserve battalions of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers were serving in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers.¹²⁰

The regimental system did, of course, provide *esprit de corps* in the B.E.F., and meant that new drafts were mixed with experienced veterans. However, regimental pride often meant that outsiders were not exactly welcomed into the regiment. As Captain Filgate noted, in May 1915;

The other day the Corps Commander, Gen.[eral] Monro paid us a surprise visit and inspected the men. They turned out splendidly + I think he was most awfully phased. We have just got about 11 young officers from the Connaughts + Gen. Monro noticed their badges. Gen.[eral] Haking who was also their [sic] remarked, 'another good regiment' and General Monro said, 'yes, but not as good as the Munsters.' I thought it very bad luck on the Connaught Officers but it was rather amusing.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ "Historical Records of the 3rd. Special Reserve Battalion, The Connaught Rangers", unpaginated manuscript, P.R.O., WO79/40.

¹¹⁹ Summary for November 1914 in war diary of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, P.R.O., WO95/1421.

¹²⁰ Appendix to April 1915 in war diary of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, P.R.O., WO95/2266.

¹²¹ Letter, Captain Filgate to Mrs. Nightingale, 5/5/15, Major Guy Nightingale papers, P.R.O., PRO30/71/3.

Also, the importance of the regimental system in cementing drafts together should not be over-estimated. Commenting on the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, brought up to strength in November 1914, John Lucy (then a sergeant) commented;

The new battalion was shiftless, half-baked in every way, and the non-commissioned officers were very poor stuff. I and the few remaining Regular non-coms. were always ticking them off and warning them against familiarity with the men, whom they called by their Christian names. The old army was finished.¹²²

There also seem to have been some serious doubts about the ability of some Irish units to reform following heavy losses. For example, after the action at Etreux the five officers and 196 other ranks left of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers were; "split up into parties and sent to the 1st. and 2nd. Army Corps to take on the onerous and thankless task of Corps troops."¹²³ Therefore, while the regimental system did help to foster morale in some respects (mixing the inexperienced with the experienced and linking the men in the regiment, however tenuously both to a geographical area and the past glories of their unit) its importance should not be over-estimated. The regimental system was not a panacea which automatically turned raw drafts into battle hardened veterans. Likewise, regimental pride, when taken to extremes, could mean that outsiders, temporarily attached to the unit, were treated with scant courtesy or respect.

In terms of fostering morale, the importance of patriotism, although rarely expressed by soldiers, should not be ignored. John Lucy suggested that the pre-war regular soldier thought little about international affairs and was ready; "to fight any foreigner."¹²⁴ However, a rare glimpse into working class patriotism in this period

¹²²J. Lucy, There's a Devil in the Drum, p.293.

¹²³S. Mc Cance, History of the Royal Munster Fusiliers, vol.II, p.121.

¹²⁴J. Lucy, There's a Devil in the Drum, p.73.

can be seen in a letter from Private William Cavish of the 1st. Battalion, Irish Guards offering condolences to the family of one of his former officers, Lieutenant N. L. Woodroffe. In this he states; "one thing you can be proud of, he died for a good cause + he died a Hero for God, for King + Country + especially for the unfortunate Women + children of France and Belgium."¹²⁵

Lastly, the importance of battalion chaplains in maintaining morale must be examined. Like patriotism, religious belief is a very personal matter and it is almost impossible to judge its importance on morale. However, some comments can be made regarding the influence of chaplains on morale. Firstly, the point must be made that, at this stage of the war, the overwhelming majority of Irish soldiers in France were Catholic and this, naturally, meant that most chaplains attached to Irish battalions were Catholic Priests. This, in itself was important in the work of the chaplains as;

the Catholic chaplain could accompany his men right up to the firing-line, whereas the Anglican chaplain was not officially permitted to go beyond base camp. This rule was relaxed in 1916, but the troops continued to label Anglican chaplains as cowards.¹²⁶

Father Henry Gill, of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, outlined his reasons for visiting the front line;

It was no doubt necessary that the Chaplain should frequently visit his men in the trenches and let them see that he was not afraid to share their dangers, for otherwise how could he preach to them of courage, patience and

¹²⁵Letter from Cavish to Woodroffe's family, 2/1/15, Woodroffe Papers, I.W.M., 95/31/1. On the general theme of British patriotism in this period see, W. J. Reader, "At Duty's Call", A Study in Obsolete Patriotism, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1988.

¹²⁶J. Leonard, "The Catholic Chaplaincy", in D. Fitzpatrick (ed.), Ireland and the First World War, The Lilliput Press and Trinity History Workshop, Dublin, 1988, p.10.

confidence in God? But this must be merely accessory to the solid work of administering the Sacraments, which could only be done at all satisfactorily when the men were out of trenches.¹²⁷

In addition to their spiritual duties, Catholic Chaplains also organised activities for the troops. Catholic chaplains had a greater responsibility to act independently in this field, as unlike the Protestant Chaplains, who could simply refer men to the Y.M.C.A. huts, there were no recreational facilities provided by Catholic Associations in France, with the exception of the St. Patrick's Soldiers' Clubs in Boulogne.¹²⁸ Thus, in March 1915, Father Gill obtained the gift of a gramophone and twenty-five records for the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, after writing to the "His Master's Voice Gramophone Company".¹²⁹

Chaplains with the Irish regiments received high praise for their work in raising morale and maintaining discipline. As Father Gill noted;

the Brigade Major speaking of the R.[oyal] I.[rish] Rif[le]s. said they were a 100% a better battalion than a month before. He apparently connected it with the presence of the Chaplain for he said 'When you came the regiment was at it's worst' i.e. It had lost most of its original men, and had got a lot of very poor reserve men to fill up its ranks.¹³⁰

Likewise, Captain Filgate was most complimentary about the chaplain appointed to the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers; "I hope the 1st. Batt.[alion] have got a man like him, as you can't realise what a difference it makes to the men + Everyone for the matter of that whatever religion he may be."¹³¹

¹²⁷H. V. Gill, "As seen by a Chaplain", p.14.

¹²⁸J. Leonard, "The Catholic Chaplaincy", p.8.

¹²⁹H. V. Gill, "As Seen by a Chaplain", p.22.

¹³⁰Letter, Father Gill to Father Provincial, 2/3/15, Jesuit Archives, Dublin.

¹³¹Letter, Filgate to Mrs. Nightingale, 17/3/15, Major Guy Nightingale papers,

In conclusion, it is obvious that the picture of morale and discipline in Irish units in the B.E.F. from August 1914 to September 1915 was a complicated one. Certainly indiscipline was a relatively serious problem in some Irish units (especially the 2nd. Battalions of the Royal Irish Rifles, Leinster Regiment and Royal Dublin Fusiliers). However, it is very difficult to generalise on this theme. There is no absolute co-relation between losses and indiscipline, although, not surprisingly, it is clear that more military offences were committed in units during wartime, than in peacetime. However, it is clear that if the B.E.F., as a whole, faced a crisis of morale, during the Winter of 1914/15, then, at least in the Irish units, this period did not see a crisis of discipline. Also, the point must be made that different units had very different disciplinary records and faced disciplinary problems at different times. This variation of experience should not really prove any surprise, as the whole rationale behind the regimental system in the British army was that no two battalions were exactly the same in terms of personnel, traditions or experience.

Clearly, the formation of Sir Roger Casement's Irish Brigade raised serious issues regarding the loyalty of Irish soldiers in the British army during this period. However, the failure of Casement to obtain more than fifty or so men, demonstrates a basic patriotism and determination among ordinary Irish troops, which existed even when measures designed to maintain his morale had been removed.

Lastly, a number of both official and private measures existed to raise morale. Official policies ranged from long held, traditional, regimental days, to newly formed divisional entertainment troops. Private contributions were equally varied, comprising everything from the gifts of bagpipes and green flags, sent by prominent public figures, to the more practical sweets, cigarettes and clothing sent by comforts funds and private individuals.

During this period, the B.E.F. had adapted, fairly successfully, to the conditions of trench warfare. Certainly its disciplinary record showed a few black

spots (most notably the "Colonels' Surrender" at St. Quentin); nevertheless, in what was, even in August 1914, a hastily improvised force, which during much of this period was not only under-equipped, but also received many replacements of poor quality, this is hardly surprising. By September 1915, it would appear that some of the worst cases of indiscipline had been ironed out in the Irish regular units and officers and men were slowly adjusting to the prospect of a long war with high casualties.

Chapter 4.

Building Discipline and Morale; The Formation and Training of the Irish New Army Divisions.

The outbreak of the Great War saw in Ireland, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, the rapid expansion of the army. In Ireland, the 10th. (Irish), 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions were raised and trained during August 1914 to February 1916. While this dissertation is primarily concerned with the discipline and morale of Irish units serving on the Western Front, it seems logical, at this point, to discuss the formation of the Irish New Army divisions. It is clear that deficiencies in equipment, training and leadership effected these units performance at the front. This chapter will be concerned mainly with the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions, as they spent their entire overseas service on the Western Front, while the 10th. (Irish) Division served in the Middle East, until its "Indianisation" in April 1918 when a number of its Irish battalions were sent to France to reinforce other divisions.

Expansion of the armed forces, in Ireland was, in some ways, much more simple than that in the rest of the United Kingdom. There was none of the competition between New Army and Territorial Force units, which led to such recriminations in Great Britain.¹ Also, few Irish depots were overwhelmed with recruits to the extent that many of their English counterparts were. Finally, the pre-war paramilitary bodies provided a number of bonuses for the Irish New Army divisions, primarily large numbers of men with some rudimentary training and, in the case of the Ulster Volunteer Force (U.V.F.), arms and equipment.

¹P. Simkins, Kitchener's Army; The Raising of the New Armies, 1914-16, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1988, pp.41-6 and I. F. W. Beckett, The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558-1945, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991, pp.226-8.

Conversely, the expansion of the army, in Ireland, created a number of problems for the military authorities which were unparalleled in Great Britain. The 36th. (Ulster) and, to a lesser extent, the 16th. (Irish) Divisions, were, in a very real sense "political" divisions. Both had strong political patrons, and this affected the formation and training of these units in many ways. Trained officers, an increasingly scarce commodity in Britain in 1914, were objected to by politicians if they did not share their own political or religious views. Conversely, there was great political pressure brought to bear to appoint certain officers, involved in the pre-war paramilitary bodies, to high ranks in the Irish New Army divisions. Certainly this lumbered both divisions with large numbers of officers, whose qualifications rested more on their political influence than their military experience.

These political pressures also extended to other issues, such as the exact names of units, the type of flags carried and badges worn and the type of regimental mascots used. While seemingly innocent enough in itself, this overdue interference of politicians in military minutiae had some serious side effects. It not only distracted officers from the more important task of preparing units for active service, but threatened the British regimental system, itself long prized in maintaining morale amongst British soldiers.

Finally, difficulties arose as the War Office and Irish politicians did not agree on the exact roles of these political divisions. Sir Edward Carson, and the Ulster Unionists, had little option, given their professed loyalty to the British Empire, but to offer the U.V.F. to the British government on the outbreak of war.² However, the intention was that proper military training and experience would prepare these volunteers to resist Home Rule, after the war.³ For John Redmond and the Irish

²As J. O'Stubbs has commented; "The Unionists as a result of the war had lost their greatest weapon, the threat of a civil war in Ulster. They were imprisoned by their patriotism." J. O'Stubbs, "The Unionists and Ireland, 1914-18", *Historical Journal*, 33, 4, 1990, p.871.

³H. Montgomery Hyde, *Carson, The Life of Sir Edward Carson, Lord Carson of Duncairn*, Constable, London, 1987, pp.377-9 and, S. Gwynn, *John Redmond's Last Years*, Edward Arnold, London, 1919, p.163.

Parliamentary Party, the situation was more complicated. Certainly Redmond was very keen to see an "Irish Brigade" formed from the Irish National Volunteers (I.N.V.), on active service. At the same time he wanted the British government to provide equipment and instructors for the I.N.V. units left in Ireland. Redmond's plan was that, post war, the "Irish Brigade" and I.N.V. would provide the basis for an Irish army.⁴

In this chapter, the contribution of the pre-war paramilitary bodies to the creation of the Irish New Army divisions will be considered. The experience, appointment and training of officers will be discussed. This will be followed by a consideration of the composition of the other ranks of these divisions and how they differed from the pre-war norm and adapted to military discipline. The training, equipping and billeting of these units will be investigated. The political pressures on unit names and divisional symbols will then be examined. Finally, consideration will be given to the disciplinary problems faced by these divisions while based in the United Kingdom and the efforts made by the military authorities and civilian bodies to improve morale.

As a result of a well organised Ulster Unionist campaign, which started almost immediately after the outbreak of the First World War, the 36th. (Ulster) Division has been seen as an entirely Protestant and Unionist Division, formed solely from the pre-war U.V.F.. Writing in 1922, Cyril Falls noted;

The Ulster Division was not created in a day. The roots from which it sprang went back into the troubled period before the war. Its life was a continuance of the life of an earlier legion, a legion of civilians banded together to protect themselves from the consequences of legislation which they believed would affect adversely their rights and privileges as citizens of the United Kingdom.⁵

⁴T. P. Dooley, "'Politics, bands and marketing': army recruitment in Waterford city 1914-15", *The Irish Sword*, XVIII, 72, 1991, p.209.

⁵C. Falls, *The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division*, Constable, London, 1996, pp.1-2.

This view of the link between the U.V.F. and the 36th. (Ulster) Division has been accepted by a large number of modern historians. Thomas Johnstone, for example, has noted; “the battalions of the (36th.) division, based on the Ulster Volunteer Force (U.V.F.) order of battle, had been in existence since before the war.”⁶ Meanwhile, Philip Orr has even suggested that the 36th. (Ulster) Division was a; “covenanting army,”⁷ all its members supposedly having signed the Ulster Covenant opposing Home Rule.

While there was, undoubtedly, some continuity between the U.V.F. and the 36th. (Ulster) Division, this constant reliance on Fall’s original account has tended to over emphasise this relationship. While Falls is remembered as the Chichele Professor of Military History at Oxford University, it is forgotten that, in 1922, he was writing both with the patronage of Sir Edward Carson and Sir James Craig⁸ and at a time when Ulster Unionists felt that their position in the newly formed Northern Ireland state was by no means secure.⁹ Thus his study emphasised the extent to which Ulster Protestants and Unionists had rallied to the Empire in her hour of need, the clear implication being that the British government now owed them a debt of honour.

A more detailed, and impartial, consideration of the formation of the 36th. (Ulster) Division suggests that the overlap between the U.V.F. and this division varied considerably from battalion to battalion. This issue is of great importance to the

(First edition, Mc Caw, Stevenson and Orr, Belfast, 1922).

⁶T. Johnstone, Orange, Green and Khaki: The Story of the Irish Regiments in the Great War, 1914-18, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1992, p.216.

⁷P. Orr, The Road to the Somme: Men of the Ulster Division Tell their Story, The Blackstaff Press, Belfast. 1987, p.45.

⁸C. Falls, The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, p.XIII and A. Jackson, “Irish Unionism”, in D. George Boyce and A. O’Day (eds.), The Making of Modern Irish History, Revisionism and the revisionist controversy, Routledge, London, 1996, p.126.

⁹See, P. Bew, P. Gibbon and H. Patterson, Northern Ireland 1921-1996, Serif, London, 1996, pp.21-54, P. Buckland, A History of Northern Ireland, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1981, pp.31-54, C. Campbell, Emergency Law in Ireland, 1918-1925, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994, pp.268-337 and B. Follis, A State Under Siege: The Establishment of Northern Ireland 1920-1925, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995, on this theme.

current study, as the extent to which the morale, discipline and, indeed, unit cohesion and loyalty of the U.V.F. transferred to the 36th. (Ulster) Division, influenced this formation's own discipline and morale.

The 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, had its roots in the pre-war Young Citizen Volunteers of Belfast. Yet the next of kin addresses of men joining this battalion, following the outbreak of war, detailed in table 4.1 overleaf, demonstrates the unit's geographical spread. However, if the personnel of the pre war Young Citizen Volunteers of Belfast did not transfer *en bloc* to the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, there were other connecting factors. The distinctive grey, pre-war Young Citizen Volunteer uniform was issued to all men in the new battalion, while they were based at Finner camp.¹⁰ Lieutenant Colonel Robert Chichester, who had been C.O. of the Young Citizen Volunteers, became the C.O. of the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles and always addressed his men as; "young citizens."¹¹ Finally, men who had been N.C.O.s in the Young Citizen Volunteers became N.C.O.s in the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles.¹²

In Belfast, it would appear that most units of the 36th. (Ulster) Division were filled relatively quickly with former U.V.F. members. By the 3rd. October 1914, the 8th., 9th., 10th. and 15th. Battalions, Royal Irish Rifles, recruited from Belfast had over 1,000 men each.¹³ However, even in Belfast, it would be wrong to see U.V.F. units entering the 36th. (Ulster) Division *en bloc*. For example, in a political display on the 4th. September 1914, Sir Edward Carson and Sir James Craig reviewed 800 men of the North Belfast Regiment, U.V.F. as they went to enlist.¹⁴ At first sight this appears an impressive display; however, it must be remembered that the North Belfast Regiment, U.V.F., in May 1914, had consisted of 6,001 men organised in seven

¹⁰Anon, "Service with the 14th. Battalion R.[oyal] I.[rish] Rif[le]s. (Y.C.V.), 1914-18 War", Royal Ulster Rifles Museum, Belfast, p.42.

¹¹*ibid*, p.23.

¹²*ibid*, p.26.

¹³*Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 3/10/14, p.6.

¹⁴I. Colvin, *The Life of Lord Carson*, vol. III, Victor Gallancz Ltd., London, 1936, p.34.

battalions.¹⁵ Seen in this context the enlistment of a mere 800 men from this unit in the 36th. (Ulster) Division is far from impressive.

Table 4.1. The backgrounds of original recruits to the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles.¹⁶

Next of kin resident in	Number of men in 14/Royal Irish Rifles.
Belfast	1203
Co. Antrim	104
Co. Down	237
Rest of Ireland	140
England	652
Scotland	40
Wales	12
U.S.A.	6
Australia	1
Argentina	2
New Zealand	2
Canada	1
South Africa	1
Channel Islands	1
TOTAL	2402

¹⁵See Royal Irish Constabulary returns for 31/3/14 and 31/5/14, in B. Mac Giolla Choille, *Intelligence Notes, 1913-16*, State Paper Office, Dublin, 1966, pp.37 and 100.

¹⁶This table is based on a manuscript booklet entitled, "Membership of the 14/Royal Irish Rifles (Y.C.V.)", Royal Ulster Rifles Museum, Belfast. It is unclear when this book was compiled, but the fact that deaths are not recorded, suggests that it was before this unit left for overseas service. The over establishment strength of the battalion is due to the fact that it was acting as a draft finding unit for other battalions of the 36th. (Ulster) Division. For example, on the 24th. June 1915, 200 men were transferred to the 16th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles. See, S. N. White, *The Terrors, 16th. (Pioneer) Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles*, The Somme Association, Belfast, 1996, p11. Eric Mercer notes that pre-war the Young Citizen Volunteers had a strength of just 750 men and thus were not actually in a position to provide an entire battalion for overseas service. See, E. Mercer, "For King, Country and a Shilling a Day: Recruitment in Belfast during the Great War, 1914-18", unpublished M.A. thesis, Queen's University of Belfast, 1998, pp.10-11.

Links between the North Belfast Regiment, U.V.F. and the 15th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles were further weakened by the low levels of officer overlap. The, then, Second Lieutenant, J. H. Stewart-Moore, on joining the battalion noted; "All the men of the 15th. Rifles came from north Belfast but only a minority of the officers, being essentially a working-class area it contained relatively few of the officer class."¹⁷

Outside Belfast, overlap between the U.V.F. and the 36th. (Ulster) Division was even less distinct. On the 3rd. October 1914, one month after the division was established, its strength per battalion was as detailed in table 4.2, below.

Table 4.2. The strength of battalions of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, 3rd. October 1914.¹⁸

Battalion	Officers	Other Ranks
8/Royal Irish Rifles (East Belfast)	15	1065
9/Royal Irish Rifles (West Belfast)	19	1102
10/Royal Irish Rifles (South Belfast)	17	1119
15/Royal Irish Rifles (North Belfast)	12	1048
11/Royal Irish Rifles (South Antrim)	16	666
12/Royal Irish Rifles (Mid Antrim)	20	668
13/Royal Irish Rifles (1st. Co. Down)	23	1246
9/Royal Irish Fusiliers (Armagh, Cavan and Monaghan)	20	940
9/Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (Tyrone)	7	643
10/Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (Derry Volunteers)	21	740
11/Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (Donegal and Fermanagh)	15	471
14/Royal Irish Rifles (Young Citizen Volunteers of Belfast).	17	1038

¹⁷J. H. Stewart- Moore, "Random Recollections", unpublished manuscript, I.W.M., p.7.

¹⁸This table is based on figures given in the *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 3/10/14, p.6. The subtitles are those of the U.V.F. regimental areas from which the battalions were recruited and, as was the case with the English Pals units, these appeared after the official regimental title. The 16th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles (2nd. County Down), the divisional pioneer battalion, was not formed until the 20th. October 1914 and thus is absent from this return. S. N. White, *The Terrors, 16th. (Pioneer) Battalion, Royal*

As this demonstrates, only in County Down and Belfast had recruitment to the 36th. (Ulster) Division, much of it presumably from the U.V.F., been satisfactory in the first month of the division's existence. Rural units also had widely varying U.V.F./36th. (Ulster) Division continuity.

In the case of the 13th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, it appears that this unit obtained the vast majority of its officers and men from U.V.F. units in County Down.¹⁹ However, even within the county the response was variable. Bangor, in North Down contributed 97 men and the Ards Peninsula 85 men, yet the entire South Down U.V.F. Regiment found just 102 men.²⁰ While this battalion recruited up to strength very quickly, it effectively marked County Down's manpower ceiling. The 16th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles (2nd. County Down), the divisional pioneer battalion had severe recruiting difficulties and did not reach its established strength until the 24th. June 1915.²¹

Other rural 36th. (Ulster) Division battalions faced more serious recruiting problems. In late October 1914, Lieutenant Colonel A. Ricardo, 9th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, had the following handbill distributed amongst members of the Tyrone U.V.F.;

Carson says 'Quit yourselves like men.'

Kitchener's Army.

9th. Service Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (Tyrone Volunteers).

The Tyrone Battalion at Finner Camp is now 864 strong. 300 more are required to complete.

Come and join your comrades. If the Ballot Act is put into force you will not be able to choose your regiment.

Irish Rifles, p. 1.

¹⁹Anon., "Historical Records of the 13th. Service Battalion, R.[oyal] I.[rish] R.[ifles], part 3", Royal Ulster Rifles Museum, Belfast, pp. 1-3.

²⁰*ibid*, pp. 1-4.

²¹S. N. White, *The Terrors, 16th. (Pioneer) Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles*, p. 11.

Hire this time with your Chums to fight against your Country's enemies.
 £9 for the half year with free food and clothing. AND YOUR WIFE AND
 CHILDREN WILL BE PROVIDED FOR; no delay now in receiving
 Separation Allowance.

IN THE TYRONES

you will find GALLANT COMRADES AND A COMFORTABLE
 REGIMENT. SURE PROMOTION FOR SMART MEN.

TRAIN NOW FOR EMPIRE AND ULSTER.²²

Privately, Ricardo stated; "We have done fairly well, but require 300 men to complete if we do not get these at an early date there is a great risk of our being filled up from outside which would be a great slur on our country [sic]."²³ Ricardo's recruitment statistics are even less impressive when we consider that, as C.O. of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers' depot at Omagh, he had started recruiting for the 36th. (Ulster) Division in early August 1914, before it was officially sanctioned by the War Office. Therefore, he had, almost literally, kidnapped recruits who should have gone to the 10th. (Irish) Division, into the 36th. (Ulster) Division!²⁴

Equally, the 11th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers relied on non-Irish recruits to fill its ranks. Indeed "C" company was formed by the British League for the support of Ulster amongst Ulster Unionist sympathisers in Great Britain.²⁵

²²Handbill included in U.V.F. recruiting correspondence, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers' Museum, Enniskillen, Box, 12. The expression "hire" in this handbill suggests that it was particularly aimed at agricultural labourers, attending hiring fairs at this time of year.

²³Letter, Ricardo to Mr. Robinson, ? October 1915, U.V.F. recruiting correspondence, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers' Museum, Enniskillen, Box, 12.

²⁴C. Falls, *The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division*, p.5.

²⁵W. J. Canning, *Ballyshannon, Belcoo, Bertincourt; The History of the 11th. Battalion, The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (Donegal and Fermanagh Volunteers) in World War One*, Privately Published, Antrim, 1996, p.15. Nicholas Perry's work suggests that almost half of the 11th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers were non-Irish, although most battalions in the division obtained over ninety percent of their original establishment from Ireland, N. Perry, "Maintaining Regimental Identity in the

Ultimately, the 36th. (Ulster) Division, before it left for overseas service was to contain a number of men from Glasgow and Liverpool.²⁶

Therefore, there were, clearly, strong links between the U.V.F. and the 36th. (Ulster) Division, but these should not be over stated. No U.V.F. unit transferred *en bloc* into the British army and U.V.F./36th. (Ulster) Division overlap varied greatly from battalion to battalion. This was for a wide variety of reasons. Firstly, many members of the U.V.F. had joined up shortly after the outbreak of war, not prepared to wait until the Ulster Division became a reality. For example, one private in the 6th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, a unit in the 10th. (Irish) Division, claimed that nearly 600 men in the battalion were former members of the U.V.F..²⁷ Secondly, the U.V.F., naturally, had no imperial service obligation. On the outbreak of war, all U.V.F. members aged 18 to 42 were asked to testify whether they would be available for service; anywhere in the United Kingdom, overseas or in Ulster only.²⁸ Significantly, the results of this canvas were never made public. However, F. P. Crozier, who helped to compile the Belfast returns freely admitted;

There was difficulty in obtaining the signatures of the men to serve 'unconditionally anywhere' in a Division, not because they did not want to go, but on account of the accursed Irish question. They feared the South,..., I now plead guilty to putting many a 'yes' in the more patriotic column in order to swell the numbers for publication.²⁹

Great War: The Case of the Irish Infantry Regiments", *Stand To*, 52, 1998, pp.6 and 11.

²⁶F. P. Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, Cedric Chivers Ltd., Bath, 1968, p.33; D. Starret, "Batman", Imperial War Museum, 79/35/1, pp.28-30 and P. Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p.71.

²⁷*Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 6/10/14, p.8. See also, M. T. Foy, "The Ulster Volunteer Force. Its Domestic Development and Political Importance in the Period 1913 to 1920", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University of Belfast, 1986, p.206.

²⁸A copy of this form survives in the papers of Private R. Grange, 12th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds.

²⁹F. P. Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, pp.20-21.

Thirdly, if members of the U.V.F. in Belfast were reluctant to enlist unconditionally, then their counterparts in rural areas must have been even less enthusiastic. Not only were many rural U.V.F. members small farmers, whose land would be left untended if they enlisted, but in areas such as South Armagh and South Down, any sectarian tensions could well lead to violence against Unionist families or property, both of which would be unprotected while volunteers were on active service.

Finally, there was also the fear that, denuded of its best men, the U.V.F. would be unable to resist Home Rule if this was imposed either during or immediately after the war. One volunteer stated, on the 7th. August 1914;

The Volunteers are to be asked tomorrow if they are unwilling to serve abroad. It may be assumed that those who will agree to do so will be the youngest and most efficient men. It is highly probable that many of them will never return. When the war is finished, and the Home Rule situation has to be faced again, the U.V.F. will be without many of its most useful members, and as a fighting force it will be less formidable. Therefore I ask you, is it desirable that any Volunteer should offer himself for foreign service?³⁰

While Kitchener saw the U.V.F. as an efficient military force and was prepared to offer concessions to secure the service of U.V.F. personnel in the British army³¹ his view of the I.N.V. was very different. Therefore, while the 16th. (Irish) Division became known as the 'Irish Brigade' the overlap between the I.N.V. and the 16th. (Irish) Division was considerably less than that between the U.V.F. and the 36th. (Ulster) Division. In many ways this was because John Redmond began bidding for higher stakes with a weaker hand. While Carson had insisted that Home Rule be suspended until Ulster exclusion could be considered at the end of the war, his actual

³⁰*Belfast News Letter*, 7/8/14, cited, P. Orr, *The Road to the Somme*, p.40.

³¹A. T. Q. Stewart, *Edward Carson*, Gill and Macmillan Ltd., Dublin, 1981, p.93.

demands in respect of the 36th. (Ulster) Division were not extortionate. The use of the term 'Ulster' in the divisional title, the utilisation of the Red Hand of Ulster as the divisional badge, the addition of U.V.F. titles to proper unit names in the style of English 'pals' battalions and the return of a small number of former U.V.F. officers to the division, could be easily accommodated within the existing British army structure. By contrast Redmond, to demonstrate his support for the war, primarily wanted the I.N.V. to be recognised by the War Office as a military force, for home defence duties only and equipped at government expense.³²

As discussed in chapter one, the I.N.V. were, even in comparison to the U.V.F., an inefficient military force in 1914, lacking trained officers, finance and equipment. Kitchener certainly was not inclined to, as he saw it, waste valuable officers and equipment on a force which, at best, would relieve Territorial Force troops from garrison duties and, at worst, would provide Irish Nationalists with the ability to enforce Home Rule on their own terms. Despite receiving support from Asquith, Redmond's attempt to have the I.N.V. recognised had failed by mid August 1914.³³ It was against this background that Redmond 'adopted' the 16th. (Irish) Division. As Terence Denman notes;

There was no indication at first that the division was intended to satisfy Redmond's demands for a specifically nationalist and catholic formation. But on 12. October [Lieutenant General Sir Lawrence] Parsons was ordered to 'clear' a brigade to receive recruits from the Redmondite Volunteers.³⁴

³²C. Hannon, "The Irish Volunteers and the Concepts of Military Service and Defence 1913-24", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University College, Dublin, 1989, pp.82-3 and 115-6.

³³*ibid.*, p.83.

³⁴T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers: The 16th. (Irish) Division in the Great War, 1914-1918, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 1992, p.38.

Despite this development, the links between the I.N.V. and the British army remained very loose. A proposal that the 8th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers should have the title "Limerick Battalion" was agreed in principle by Parsons. However, insufficient numbers of Limerick I.N.V. enlisted to allow this proposal to go ahead.³⁵ Certainly numbers, and indeed bodies of the I.N.V., joined the 16th. (Irish) Division and it is noticeable that some units based their recruitment on politics rather than place of domicile. Thus, 100 men of the Enniskillen I.N.V. and 500 of the Belfast I.N.V. joined the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers³⁶, despite the fact that all of these recruits came from outside the Connaught Rangers' regimental recruiting area.

The political nature of the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions shaped their development in a number of ways. Firstly, in terms of the officers and other ranks joining these units. Secondly, in the actual structure of the Divisions. Thirdly, in relation to the emblems and mascots adopted by these divisions and, lastly, in the more practical side of the equipment made available for these units.

In terms of officers, both the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions were at a disadvantage as most of the experienced officers in Ireland had already been posted to the 10th. (Irish) Division, or to non Irish units. N. E. Drury, joining the 6th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, a unit in the 10th. (Irish) Division, as a second lieutenant in November 1914, noted that the officers of the rank of captain and above consisted of two serving officers of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, four former officers of the same regiment, two Indian Army officers, one former officer of the Rifle Brigade and two inspectors of the Royal Irish Constabulary.³⁷ This left very few experienced officers for the later Irish divisions.

³⁵Letter, Parsons to Colonel Maurice Moore, 29/10/14, Maurice Moore papers, N.L.I., Ms.10,561/19-40.

³⁶Letter, Parsons to Tennant, 27/2/15, Correspondence and Diary Extracts of Lieutenant General Sir Lawrence Parsons, 1915-18, N.L.I., Ms.21,278 and T. Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers*, pp.49-50.

³⁷Diaries of Captain N. E. Drury, 6th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, N.A.M., 7607-69-1, pp.8-9.

U.V.F. influence certainly managed to secure some regular officers for the 36th. (Ulster) Division, who otherwise would have gone to other units. For example, F. P. Crozier, who, as a captain on the reserve of officers was ordered to report to a Royal Irish Fusiliers battalion in Dublin, simply ignored this order, preferring to stay with the U.V.F.. He became a major and, later, a lieutenant colonel in the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles.³⁸ The U.V.F. also requested the services of a number of officers who had reported for duty with other units on the outbreak of war. A number of these, for example, Lieutenant Colonel R. D. P. S. Chichester (Guards Reserve), Major W. S. Blacker (Royal Field Artillery), Captain the Earl of Clanwilliam (Household Cavalry), Captain A. Ricardo (Royal Irish Fusiliers Depot) and Captain W. B. Spender (South Eastern Coastal Defences) were returned for duty with the 36th. (Ulster) Division.³⁹

U.V.F. influence also saw the appointment of Major General C. H. Powell, ex Indian Army, and in 1914, the commander of the North Down Regiment, U.V.F. as G.O.C. of the 36th. (Ulster) Division,⁴⁰ Colonel G. Couchman, late Somerset Light Infantry and an unattached officer in the U.V.F., as Brigadier General commanding the 107th. Infantry Brigade and Colonel G. Hackett-Pain, late Worcester Regiment and U.V.F. Chief of Staff, as Brigadier General commanding 108th. Infantry Brigade.⁴¹ In addition, James Craig, M.P., who had served as a captain in the Boer War, was appointed Quartermaster General of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, with the rank of lieutenant colonel.⁴²

³⁸F. P. Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, pp.18-19.

³⁹ "Nominal Roll of Officers recently recalled to the colours, whose services are applied for, for the Ulster Division", (undated, but c. August 1914), Lieutenant General Sir George Richardson papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.1498/7.

⁴⁰M. T. Foy, "The Ulster Volunteer Force", p.208.

⁴¹Lieutenant General Sir George Richardson papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.1498/7 and "Return of Officers on Reserve or Special Reserve - serving as Commanders and Staff officers with the Ulster Volunteer Force", undated but 1914, Carson papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.1507/A/10/10.

⁴²Lieutenant Colonel James Craig's personal file, P.R.O., WO339/3792.

The usefulness of these officers secured by U.V.F. influence was variable. Brigadier General G. Couchman did not prove to be an effective commanding officer, and one of Major General Sir Oliver Nugent's first acts, on becoming G.O.C. of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, was to remove Couchman from his command.⁴³ Equally, while Craig was able to secure some U.V.F. equipment for the 36th. (Ulster) Division, he was so ill, and indeed on sick leave from the 5th. July 1915 to 10th. March 1916, that his deputy had to take on his workload. Nevertheless, Sir Edward Carson personally intervened with the War Office in an attempt to allow Craig to accompany the 36th. (Ulster) Division overseas!⁴⁴ By contrast Lieutenant Colonel S. W. Blacker turned the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers into, arguably, the best battalion in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, in terms of both discipline and combat effectiveness.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, political influence could do nothing to remedy the shortage of experienced officers in either the 16th. (Irish) or 36th. (Ulster) Divisions. In the 16th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, there was only one retired regular officer, the C.O., Major John Leader.⁴⁶ The 8th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers had two regular officers, the C.O., Lieutenant Colonel John Kevin O'Meagher, who had commanded the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers on the outbreak of war, and Major M. Williamson, a retired Indian army officer, while the 9th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers had only one regular officer, Major Henry F. Williams.⁴⁷ The 9th. Battalion,

⁴³Letter, Nugent to his wife, 26/10/15, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.3835/E/2/5/20A. The circumstances surrounding Couchman's removal are examined further in chapter 5.

⁴⁴See James Craig's personal file, P.R.O., WO339/3792, especially letter from Carson to General Sclater, 29/7/15. It is unclear what exactly was the cause of Craig's ill health. Patrick Buckland suggested that Craig was afflicted with a form of spotted fever. (P. Buckland, *James Craig*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1980, p.117). However, in his letter, resigning his commission, Craig stated that he was suffering from blood poisoning, see letter Craig to Secretary, War Office, 10/3/16, P.R.O., WO339/3792.

⁴⁵P. Orr, *The Road to the Somme*, p.131.

⁴⁶S. N. White, *The Terrors, 16th. (Pioneer) Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles*, pp.3-4.

⁴⁷M. Staunton, "The Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Great War, 1914-19", unpublished M.A., University College, Dublin, 1986, p.214.

Royal Irish Rifles had only two officers with previous regular experience; Lieutenant Colonel G. S. Ormerod, late Royal Munster Fusiliers, who was almost seventy years old and Major F. P. Crozier, a reformed alcoholic.⁴⁸

At the battalion level these officers were, again, a variable quantity. Crozier proved to be an efficient officer and ended the war as a brigadier general. By contrast, other veteran officers proved a severe embarrassment. During December 1914, Captain Wake, a South African veteran with only one leg, reported for service with the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles. Following a route march;

Capt. Wake gave the command 'Halt!', as the men had been 'Marking Time', Capt. Wake's next command was 'Fall out the Gentlemen.' For some unknown reason he then fell off his horse. He lay where he fell, apparently unhurt. He made no attempt to rise. He then gave the final command, 'Battalion Dis-miss', whereupon the parade did a Right Turn, saluted and then dispersed. Only then did Capt.[sic] Wake get up, and hand his mount over to the groom, who was waiting. Captain Wake remained only a short time with the 14th. Battalion.⁴⁹

There were similar problems in the 16th. (Irish) Division. For example, the 7th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers had two C.O.s during their training period in the United Kingdom.⁵⁰ Lieutenant Colonel M. Hughes relieved Lieutenant Colonel Cox as C.O. in April 1915 due, it would seem, to recruiting and disciplinary problems in this unit.⁵¹

⁴⁸F. P. Crozier, A Brass Hat in No Man's Land, pp.32-4 and D. Starret, "Batman", Imperial War Museum, 79/35/1, p14.

⁴⁹Anon, "Service with the 14th. Battalion Royal Irish Rifles", Royal Ulster Rifles Museum, Belfast, p.54.

⁵⁰G. A. Cooper Walker, The Book of the Seventh Service Battalion, The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, from Tipperary to Ypres, Brindley and Son Printers, Dublin, 1920, pp.2-7.

⁵¹T. Johnstone, Orange, Green and Khaki, p.194.

However, there is some evidence that other ranks in the New Armies were prepared to tolerate and work for officers who were not entirely competent in their duties. Rifleman MacRoberts of the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, noted that his company commander, Captain Peter Kerr-Smiley (M.P. for North Antrim 1910-22);

was a cavalry officer, as most of us knew, and had little experience with infantry and was therefore bound to make mistakes, but we were to do the right thing, to support him loyally and he would do his best, so we would get along well together. He had a good voice and seemed to be very cool and collected.⁵²

Apart from regular officers, there were two other types of officers with some previous military experience available to the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions. Namely, former militia or special reserve officers and officers from pre-war paramilitary bodies. Retired militia officers appear to have been largely unsuccessful appointments. Major Sir Francis Vane, writing of his fellow officers in the 9th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, noted;

Several things were pathetic enough. Several old officers of Irish Militia regiments had volunteered to come out, expecting jobs on the remounts etc.. They were enthusiastically patriotic and admirable, but as captains of modern companies the work was much too great for their strength, and having left the Army for a score of years they did not know much about modern drill. When I was on parade they were constantly coming to me for advice - one asked me how many men there were in a modern company, another to give him a few useful words of command, etc..

⁵²Diary of Rifleman J. MacRoberts, 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds, p.14.

I did my best to help them at their request, but applied for them to be removed to more convenient employment. This was eventually done - but one at least died of the strain of it all.⁵³

A number of officers from the pre-war paramilitary groups received commissions in the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions. In the 16th. (Irish) Division, Lieutenant General Sir Lawrence Parsons refused to give commissions to such officers *en masse*. While Parsons gave four or five commissions in the Divisional Artillery to I.N.V. officers, he would only give commissions in infantry battalions to I.N.V. officers who brought a number of their men with them.⁵⁴ Thus John Wray, an officer in the Enniskillen I.N.V., received a commission in the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers when he brought 200 of his men with him.⁵⁵ Therefore, by November 1914, Colonel Maurice Moore, the Inspector General of the I.N.V., was referring I.N.V. officers, desirous of a commission in the British army, to the Tyneside Irish Brigade, where their claims would be dealt with more sympathetically.⁵⁶

In the 36th. (Ulster) Division, many more openings were available for former paramilitary officers. For example, C. F. Falls, who had commanded the 3rd. Battalion, Fermanagh Regiment, U.V.F. was, by November 1914, a captain in the 11th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, having never been a member of the regular or reserve forces.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, in the 13th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, it appears that nine of the twenty nine officers of this unit, including three of the four captains and the adjutant, had been commissioned purely on the basis of their U.V.F. experience.⁵⁸

⁵³F. Vane, *Agin the Governments*, Samson Low and Marston, London, 1928, p.248.

⁵⁴Letters, Parsons to Colonel Maurice Moore, 27/10/14 and 29/10/14, Maurice Moore papers, N.L.I., Ms.10,561/19-40.

⁵⁵T. Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers*, pp.43-4.

⁵⁶Letter, Moore to Captain Fitzgerald, 26/11/14, Maurice Moore papers, N.L.I., Ms.10,561/19-40.

⁵⁷W. J. Canning, *Ballyshannon, Belcoo, Bertincourt*, pp.7-8 and 19.

⁵⁸Anon., "Historical Records of the 13th. Service Battalion, R.[oyal] I.[rish] R.[ifles]",

When the supply of regular, reserve, ex-special reserve/militia and former paramilitary officers had been exhausted, other methods had to be resorted to in order to obtain officers. Lieutenant General Sir Lawrence Parsons established a cadet company in the 7th. Battalion, Leinster Regiment. This was created in response to what Parsons saw as the poor quality of candidates presenting themselves for commissions. He noted;

Many of the Candidates are quite socially impossible as Officers - men who write their applications in red or green ink on a blank bill-head of a village shop. These are the class most successfully weeded out by the enlisting ordeal [into the cadet company in the 7th. Battalion, Leinster Regiment], as they think it beneath their dignity to enlist as 'Common' Soldiers to be herded with 'riff-raff'.⁵⁹

Parsons's cadet company was to prove a great asset to the 16th. (Irish) Division, between November 1914 and December 1915; 161 cadets passed through it, to become officers in the division.⁶⁰ This company was particularly useful, as in Ireland, very few schools or colleges had established Officer Training Corps (O.T.C.) by 1914. Indeed, the only O.T.C. in Ireland were at Trinity College, Dublin, The Queen's University of Belfast, The Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland, The Royal Veterinary College, Cork Grammar School, Campbell College, Belfast, St. Andrew's College, Dublin and St. Columba's College, Dublin.⁶¹ These institutions were

Royal Ulster Rifles Museum, Belfast, p.12 and War Office, Monthly Army List for January 1915, H.M.S.O., London, 1915. The anonymous account above, suggests that Lieutenant Fridlington had served as an instructor in the Egyptian Army. His pre-war position as a paid instructor to the West Down Regiment, U.V.F., and post of adjutant in this service battalion (a post normally filled, wherever possible, by a regular officer) would appear to support this.

⁵⁹Letter, Parsons the Secretary, War Office, 29/11/14, Sir Lawrence Parsons's papers, N.L.I., Ms.21,278.

⁶⁰T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers, p.43.

⁶¹M. Staunton, "The Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Great War", p.88.

attended, almost exclusively, by Protestants. Parsons's cadet company thus provided a manner in which Irish Catholics could receive an O.T.C. type training.

However, the cadet company in the 7th. Battalion, Leinster Regiment, was not endorsed by a number of leading Nationalists. Colonel Maurice Moore, noted, in November 1914;

though the latter [Parsons] is very sympathetic and an old friend of mine, he may be inclined to take from us the only privilege we have, viz. - the appointment of officers. He says he has 200 applications and is going to lump them together into a company for drill and choose the best, that is I admit a very good plan from his point of view, but may mean the officering of the [Irish] Brigade by Unionists, whereas we want it as a training place for our officers to be ready after the war.⁶²

Parsons's cadet company gained unpopularity amongst Nationalists as it developed. It was clear that Parsons did not see it as a training school for I.N.V. officers. Equally, his decision that Irish Parliamentary Party, M.P.s, even, in the case of William Redmond, those with military experience, would have to serve in the cadet company was tactless in the extreme.⁶³ Indeed, Parsons's insistence that William

⁶²Letter, Moore to Joseph Devlin, M.P., 7/11/14, Maurice Moore papers, N.L.I., Ms.10,561/1-18.

⁶³The Nationalist M.P.s concerned were; William Redmond, who had served as a subaltern in the Wexford Militia in 1879 and trained in the cadet company. (T. Denman, *A Lonely Grave; The Life and Death of Major William Redmond*, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 1995, pp.86-7) and Stephen Gwynn, who had no military experience, and served in the cadet company. (M. Lenox-Conygham, *An Old Ulster House*, p.225). In addition Tom Kettle, a former M.P. became a lieutenant in the 16th. (Irish) Division, but it is unclear whether he served in the cadet company, as he was utilised in recruiting work. (J. B. Lyons, *The Enigma of Tom Kettle; Irish Patriot, Essayist, Poet, British Soldier, 1880-1916*, The Glendale Press, Dublin, 1983, pp.267-81). Finally, the Independent Nationalist M.P., Daniel D. Sheehan became an officer in the 9th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers. It is unclear whether he served in the cadet company. (M. Staunton, "The Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Great War", pp.220-1).

Archer Redmond, M.P. would have to serve in the cadet company was seen as a personal snub by his father, John Redmond.⁶⁴

There were, of course, sound military reasons why such men should go through some form of training before being commissioned. However, politically, for the Irish Parliamentary Party, this policy was damaging. As Nora Roberts, Parsons's daughter, noted of the cadet company;

as a means of training officers it could not have been more satisfactory nor, for the majority, more popular. But as a political device for a distracted leader trying to entice M.P.s, J.P.s, touchy publicans, and financial supporters to send their sons to an extremely dangerous and not very popular war it was, to say the least of it, rebuffing.⁶⁵

Parsons's cadet company and whole policy on commissions was further discredited by three factors. Firstly, pitifully few Catholics received commissions in the 16th. (Irish) Division. Scarcely one officer in five was a Catholic⁶⁶ and of the officers above the rank of major, only one, Lieutenant Colonel O' Meagher, 8th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, was not a Protestant.⁶⁷

Redmond highlighted the problems this created for the morale of men serving in the 16th. (Irish) Division, stating that;

The fact that every one of the three Brigadier-Generals of the 16th. Division is an Englishman, every Colonel in the Division, and, with one or two exceptions, every Major and Captain, Protestants, and that the smallest

⁶⁴T. Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers*, p.48. W. A. Redmond won the M.C. while serving as a Captain in the Irish Guards.

⁶⁵N. Robertson, *Crowned Harp, Memories of the Last Years of the Crown in Ireland*, Allen Figgis & Co. Ltd., Dublin, 1960, p.126.

⁶⁶Return in the Redmond papers, National Library of Ireland, Ms.15,259, cited, D. Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands, 1912-39*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p.53.

⁶⁷T. Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers*, p.45.

possible proportion of Officers of these Regiments are Catholics has been, and is, doing the greatest possible harm.⁶⁸

Secondly, the cadet company was easily by-passed by a number of Englishmen who obtained temporary commissions. Some received direct commissions from the War Office⁶⁹, while a number of Englishmen, who had been privates in exclusive London Territorial Force units, were directly commissioned into the 16th. (Irish) Division.⁷⁰

Finally, many Nationalists contrasted the difficulty they had in obtaining commissions in the 16th. (Irish) Division, with the apparent ease with which Ulster Unionists received commissions in the 36th. (Ulster) Division. Stephen Gwynn noted that John Redmond had no influence in appointing officers to the 16th. (Irish) Division, continuing;

Does anyone suppose that Sir Edward Carson had no voice in the staffing of the Ulster Division? He had at all events received from the first a clear promise that all professional soldiers who had been officers in the Ulster Volunteers would be officers in the Division and that any who had been mobilised should be restored to their associates in the Division.⁷¹

⁶⁸Memorandum by John Redmond relating to an interview with Lord Kitchener at the War Office, 29/9/15, John Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms.15,261(7).

⁶⁹Denman gives, as an example of this, the case of Ivone Kirkpatrick, who he states, was refused a commission by Parsons, but was then posted, as a second lieutenant to the 8th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in the 16th. (Irish) Division, by the War Office, T. Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers*, p.42. In fact, Kirkpatrick was given a direct commission into the 5th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, serving in the 10th. (Irish) Division. See, I. Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle, Memoirs of Ivone Kirkpatrick*, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London, 1959, p.4. Nevertheless, in November 1914, Parsons requested that the War Office send no more second lieutenants to the 16th. (Irish) Division, as his cadet company would fill the vacancies. Letter, Parsons to the Secretary, War Office, 29/11/14, Parsons's papers, N.L.I., Ms.21,278.

⁷⁰T. Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers*, p.46, F. Vane, *Agin the Governments*, p.248 and M. Staunton, "The Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Great War", p.215.

⁷¹S. Gwynn, *John Redmond's Last Years*, Edward Arnold, London, 1919, p.173.

By August 1915 John Redmond stated; "I would be very glad to see a real Officer Training Corps started in Ireland. The one at Fermoy, established by General Parsons, has proved a perfect fraud + fiasco."⁷² At this time, Redmond was firmly supporting the Inns of Court O.T.C. selection board established in Dublin.⁷³

In the 36th. (Ulster) Division, no cadet company on Parsons's model was established and, indeed, it does appear that many men without any previous military experience found it relatively easy to obtain commissions in this unit. Nora Robertson argued that; "practically all Ulstermen of officer standing had had some form of military training, even at school in the O.T.C.. The Nationalist type had not."⁷⁴ Terence Denman has repeated this argument.⁷⁵ However, given the small number of O.T.C. units existing in Ulster in 1914 (namely, Campbell College and The Queen's University of Belfast) this does appear to be overstating the case.

Indeed, many men appear to have been commissioned into the 36th. (Ulster) Division simply as they were prominent businessmen, or had some professional qualifications. For example, of the captains in the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles in mid-1915, George Gaffikin had been a schoolmaster pre-war and Horace Haslett, a Belfast merchant.⁷⁶ The only training given to such men, except informally, by senior officers in their own battalion, was at a special officers' course which took place at The Queen's University of Belfast. J. H. Stewart-Moore, commenting on the usefulness of this course stated; "I do not think that we learnt much that was useful but the course provided an opportunity for one or two pleasant tea parties."⁷⁷

⁷²Letter, Redmond to Maurice Moore, 20/8/15, Maurice Moore papers, N.L.I., Ms.10,561/19-40.

⁷³ibid, and Letter to Colonel Erington from Knight Ryan(?), 12/8/15, in file entitled, "Inns of Court, O.T.C., Details of Regional Selection Boards", Guildhall Library, Ms.17,684.

⁷⁴N. Robertson, *Crowned Harp*, p.125.

⁷⁵T. Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers*, p.45.

⁷⁶F. P. Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Mans Land*, p.55. Neither of these men appear to have been involved in the U.V.F..

⁷⁷J. H. Stewart- Moore, "Random Recollections", I.W.M., p.6.

Thus the political involvement in the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions, from the point of view of officer appointments was, generally, damaging. A number of experienced officers, notably, Colonel Couchman of the 107th. Infantry Brigade, appear to have been selected on the basis of their political allegiances, rather than their efficiency in creating well trained and disciplined units. Likewise, enthusiastic amateurs who attained their commissions through political connections often did not become efficient officers. For example, Tom Kettle was an intelligent and witty man, who proved to be an excellent recruiting agent. However, his chronic alcoholism made him a disastrous choice as an infantry officer.⁷⁸

However, having said this, political jobbery in officer appointments was certainly not as blatant in the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions as it was in the 38th. (Welsh) Division.⁷⁹ Equally, it should be remembered that many of the experienced officers obtained by political influence were no less efficient than many of the "dug-outs" who officered the New Armies.⁸⁰

In terms of discipline and morale the importance of the composition of the officer corps is unclear. Certainly, as will be examined later in this chapter, a number of New Army officers proved to be very poor at maintaining discipline in their units. Meanwhile, the effect on morale of finding that your C.O. had served in the Second Afghan War of 1878-80, cannot have been to raise it appreciably.⁸¹ Nevertheless, it is clear that many other ranks understood the problems involved in establishing new units and were prepared to co-operate with officers who were not fully competent.

⁷⁸J. B. Lyons, *The Enigma of Tom Kettle*, p.279.

⁷⁹C. Hughes, *Mametz, Lloyd George's 'Welsh Army' at the Battle of the Somme*, Gliddon Books, London, 1990, pp.28-35 and C. Hughes, "The New Armies", in I. F. W. Beckett and K. Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Arms; A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War*, Tom Donovan Publishing Ltd., London, 1990, p.117.

⁸⁰K. Simpson, "The Officers", in I. F. W. Beckett and K. Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Arms*, p.74 and P. Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p.220.

⁸¹H. de Montmorency, *Sword and Stirrup; Memories of an Adventurous Life*, G. Bell and Sons Ltd., London, 1936, p.247. The officer referred to was the C.O. of the 75 Bde., R.F.A., 16th. (Irish) Division.

The other ranks in the Irish New Army divisions appear to have come from less varied social backgrounds than their counterparts in Great Britain.⁸² Pauline Codd, writing in relation to County Wexford and Martin Staunton, regarding County Clare suggest that over eighty per cent of recruits from these areas, during the war, were labourers.⁸³ Even from industrial Belfast, many of the recruits were unskilled workers. For example, in June 1917 a roll of honour unveiled in Harland and Wolff shipyard's boilershop, listed 260 men from that workshop on active service. Of these, 36 were skilled workers, 42 apprentices and 182 unskilled workers.⁸⁴ Also, in the 10th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, evidence suggests that seventy-four percent of men serving in this unit between October 1914 and July 1916 were unskilled workers.⁸⁵

This contrast to the general British experience was important for two main reasons. Firstly, it made the number of potential N.C.O.s very small, especially in the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions, which had few veterans in the ranks. David Starret noted the situation at Donard Camp, where the 107th. Brigade was quartered; "'Acting' sergeants came round half-a-dozen times a day to ask your name. I doubt if some of them could spell their own."⁸⁶ Likewise, J. H. M. Staniforth, serving in the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, wrote; "Well, our sergeant was a mild, helpless old thing with a 'strong weakness' himself, so he let us get out of hand altogether and we scattered over the town, drinking hard."⁸⁷ Secondly, the unskilled background of

⁸²P. Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p.71.

⁸³P. Codd, "Recruiting and Responses to the War in Wexford", in D. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Ireland and the First World War*, Trinity History Workshop, Dublin, 1988, p.15 and M. Staunton, "Kilrush, Co. Clare and the Royal Munster Fusiliers; The Experience of an Irish Town in the First World War", *The Irish Sword*, vol.XVI, no.65, 1987, p.269.

⁸⁴*Belfast Newsletter*, 22/6/17, cited in E. Mercer, "For King, Country and a Shilling a Day", p.14.

⁸⁵Roll Book for No.3 Platoon, No.9 Section, "A" Company, 10th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, compiled by Sergeant R. Campbell, I.W.M.

⁸⁶D. Starret, "Batman", Imperial War Museum, p.5.

⁸⁷J. H. M. Staniforth, "Kitchener's Soldier, 1914-18", I.W.M., 67/41/1, p.3.

many Irish recruits may have retarded the pace of training in these New Army units and thus delayed their departure to the front.

Nevertheless, as in the rest of the United Kingdom, many middle class recruits to the Irish New Army divisions, found it difficult to adapt to army life. When J. H. M. Staniforth joined the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers in October 1914 he noted;

I turned in early, on an iron bed-cot, under two ragged brown verminous horse-blankets. I got my best sleep between then and midnight; and then the rest of my fellow-recruits began to come in, blind drunk. The place resembled a casual ward; about a dozen seedy, ragged, lousy, unshaven tramps, who lurched in and lay on their cots smoking, spitting, quarrelling, making water all over the room (excuse details) hiccuping and vomiting. It was after three before the last of them settled into a repulsive noisy slumber among his rags. It was the quaintest night I ever spent.⁸⁸

Later, Staniforth described his fellow recruits as, “these, filthy, sodden, smelling, staggering, slobbering lepers who sang and cursed and quarrelled and snore by turns.”⁸⁹ By early February 1915, such problems were being rectified in the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, as Rifleman J. MacRoberts noted;

we were beginning to recall the little conventions that constitute modern good manners and everyone who forgot himself at table now, was tossed in a blanket, after having been properly tried and condemned by a special judge with jury. We had quite a number of offenders each night.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ibid, pp.2-3, citing letter of Staniforth to his parents, 18/10/14.

⁸⁹ibid, p.4.

⁹⁰Diary of Rifleman J. MacRoberts, 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, Liddle Collection, p.7.

In disciplinary terms, the backgrounds of some recruits posed potential problems. Former soldiers or militia men could cause difficulties for their new officers. A. M. Cooper, serving in the 8th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, remembered;

There were militia-men among us, wearing South African war ribbons, who were amused at the large body of civilians who had become soldiers overnight. They were always ready to make fun of any arduous drill and training which they thought to be unnecessary - for them anyway.⁹¹

Another major problem faced in Irish service battalions, especially in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, was the over-familiarity of N.C.O.s with other ranks. This was a result of the firm territorial basis of many service battalions. Cyril Falls stated that; "The Infantry of the 36th. Division was formed on perhaps the most strictly territorial basis of any Division of the New Armies,... The company, the platoon, was a close community, an enlarged family."⁹² This point is refined by Nicholas Perry, who notes that while, in 1914, the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, contained just forty four per cent of its men from the regimental recruiting area, in 1916 the 13th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles derived just ten per cent of its manpower from outside Belfast and Counties Antrim and Down.⁹³

This "family" atmosphere in some units caused difficulties when N.C.O.s were appointed. As G. D. Sheffield notes;

Typically, the N.C.O. was from a similar social background as the men he commanded, and possibly had been on friendly terms with them

⁹¹M. Cooper (ed.), We Who Knew, The Journal of an infantry subaltern during the Great War, The Book Guild Ltd., Lewes, 1994, p.16.

⁹²C. Falls, The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, p.12.

⁹³N. Perry, "Nationality in the Irish Infantry Regiments in the First World War", War and Society, vol.XII, no.1, 1994, p.68.

previously. On promotion, however, the fledgling N.C.O. was required to hold aloof from his erstwhile barrack mates and refrain from social intercourse with them,..., Even the Lance Corporal and the Private were obliged to observe a form of apartheid.⁹⁴

Philip Orr mentions that this strict localisation of some battalions of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, meant that many N.C.O.s found it difficult to perform their duties properly;

Many N.C.O.s were relatives or friends of men they had commanded, and orders, which should have been issued with military brusqueness, came out, often enough, as friendly requests. To counter this some N.C.O.s were changed about, to be in charge of men with whom they were not so familiar.⁹⁵

The formation and training of the Irish New Army units faced problems on a number of other levels, all of which influenced the morale of the service battalions. Firstly, there were political issues surrounding the names of units and the badges, flags and mascots used. Secondly, there was the purely practical problem of trying to train men with insufficient numbers of trained officers and N.C.O.s or equipment. Thirdly, there were problems associated with the slow recruitment of units. Lastly, there were difficulties with billeting the large numbers of new recruits.

As has already been discussed, the overlap between the I.N.V. and 16th. (Irish) Division and the U.V.F. and the 36th. (Ulster) Division was far from absolute. However, these divisions' political patrons wanted to influence how the divisions

⁹⁴G. D. Sheffield, "The Effect of War Service on the 22nd. Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (Kensingtons) 1914-18, with special reference to morale, discipline and the officer/man relationship", unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Leeds, 1984, p.6.

⁹⁵P. Orr, The Road to the Somme, p.54.

developed and what symbols they used. Many of these political trappings caused controversy and were potentially damaging to morale.

One of the earliest decisions to be made in these divisions was the exact name of the units concerned. The title "Ulster" for the 36th. Division was reluctantly conceded by Kitchener, as the title had never appeared in the British army before.⁹⁶ Likewise the so-called "Dixie" badge was issued to the 36th. (Ulster) Division. The latter decision shocked a number of officers serving in the division. As F. P. Crozier related;

A single instance will illustrate this pride of regiment. Someone - I know not who - devised a Divisional cap badge, comprising the Red Hand of Ulster, to be worn by the whole of the Ulster Division. The political suggestion was approved by the higher authorities, without our knowledge. The badges arrived, were issued, and of course worn, since an order is an order; but regimental tradition prevailed over political stupidity. Protests reached Divisional Headquarters in such large numbers, in the regulation manner, that within a week the Royal Irish Rifles badge was again in every cap. It is possible to play on regimental tradition to almost any extent, provided the way is known, but it cannot be cut across for apparently no good military reason.⁹⁷

Redmond was keen that, to evoke the memory of the "Wild Geese" the 16th. Division should be known as the "Irish Brigade" and given a distinctive badge and uniforms.⁹⁸ However, Parsons was generally unsympathetic to the "Irish Brigade"

⁹⁶H. Montgomery Hyde, *Carson*, p.378.

⁹⁷F. P. Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, p.45.

⁹⁸C. Hannon, "The Irish Volunteers and the Concepts of Military Service and Defence, 1913-1924", pp.115-6.

title and the trappings which this entailed. In a letter to John Redmond in December 1914 he noted;

I have always been opposed to any special Badge being stuck to the 16th. Div[ision],..., [members of new units are serving in battalions of] old Irish Reg[imen]ts. whose honours and badges they have a right to + should be proud to wear,..., These old Batt[alio]ns. are all wearing their old Badges, why should their new brothers in arms require a new badge?

The only reason I can see is that the Ulster Div[isio]n. has a silly badge replacing the time honoured badges of the Regiments they belong to. I am not in favour of copying the Ulster Div[isio]n..

Remember I view the question entirely with a soldiers eyes. I have spent 44 years in the Army + know its traditions, history + sentiment + share with all other old soldiers a dislike of 'Fancy' Corps + an intense love and admiration for our old Regimental institution.⁹⁹

Nevertheless, the whole issue of a badge for the 16th. Division continued for almost a year. This involved a three way correspondence between Redmond, the War Office and Parsons. Designs were submitted which incorporated almost every symbol which was seen as embodying the Irish spirit. Complex badges involving harps, coats of arms, shamrocks and crowns, which would have required men of super-human proportions to wear them, proliferated. Finally, no less a personage than Field Marshal Lord Kitchener himself, decided that a shamrock would be the divisional badge.¹⁰⁰

The 16th. (Irish) Division also received three mascots from John Redmond, namely, three Irish wolfhounds. As these animals carried no party political baggage,

⁹⁹Letter, Parsons to Redmond, 12/12/14, Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms.15,519.

¹⁰⁰Letter, Parsons to Redmond, 27/6/15, Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms.15,519.

Parsons appears to have welcomed them, as an aid to morale. The only controversy they caused was over which battalions of the division should receive them. Finally, Parsons decided that the senior battalions of each brigade, viz., the 6th. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles and 7th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, should receive one wolfhound each.¹⁰¹

In terms of morale, the preservation of the regimental system was probably the most important result of these discussions. Given the fact that the 49th. Infantry Brigade did not arrive in France until February 1916, three months after the rest of the 16th. (Irish) Division and the early date at which some service battalions in the division were disbanded, it is questionable whether the 16th. (Irish) Division ever attained a corporate identity like that enjoyed in the 36th. (Ulster) Division.¹⁰² Certainly, one imagines that Kitchener, Parsons and, even Redmond, had more important matters to consider than the badges and buttons of the 16th. (Irish) Division.

The 10th. (Irish), 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions all faced problems in their training, which were similar to those experienced by other New Army units in Britain.¹⁰³ Training in the 10th. (Irish) Division was reasonably comprehensive, given the large number of regular or recently retired officers and N.C.O.s available in this formation. Indeed, the 10th. (Irish) Division was the only Irish division to complete the course laid down by the War Office.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹Letter, Parsons to Redmond, Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms. 15,261 (3).

¹⁰²On the divisional loyalty in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, see, Wilfrid Spender, "History of the U.V.F. and the 36th. Division", p.32, Wilfrid Spender papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.1295/2/1A-9. Spender was the G.S.O.2 of the 36th. (Ulster) Division during this period.

¹⁰³J. Winter comments on the training of the New Armies; "The training many of these men went through at first varied from the cursory to the derisory." J. M. Winter, The Great War and the British People, Macmillan Publishers Ltd., London, 1985, p.31. Meanwhile J. Bourne notes; "The level of training afforded to three of them [New Army divisions], the 30th., 32nd. and 34th., bordered on the scandalous." J. M. Bourne, Britain and the Great War, 1914-1918, Edward Arnold, London, 1989, p.160.

¹⁰⁴T. Johnstone, Orange, Green and Khaki, p.94.

In the 16th. (Irish) Division, training was less organised, and this has led to some historical debate. Terence Denman believes that Parsons was an effective training officer, stating;

Parsons was energetic and methodical in his frequent inspections of his troops in a determined, and largely successful, attempt to prepare his division for the realities of trench warfare and to counter the debilitating effects of long months of training and waiting.¹⁰⁵

By contrast, Tom Johnstone believes that Parsons proved to be an ineffective divisional commander. He believes the training programme to have been insufficiently intensive, involving only eight to nine hours work per day; Parsons set no uniform standards which battalions were expected to meet and, as late as August 1915, Parsons had not even visited some of the units under his command.¹⁰⁶ Certainly, training in the 16th. (Irish) Division could verge on the shambolic;

On the 11th. February [1915], Major-General Vesey Dawson, C.V.O., inspected the four battalions of the [49th.] Brigade in training, and seemed quite pleased with their progress. An amusing and needless to say, unrehearsed incident occurred during his inspection of 'The Seventh' [Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers]. A sham attack had been planned, with various objectives, etc., in the vicinity of Ballyglass. Three companies were detailed to participate in the scheme, and 'B' Company were to do company training independently. By the strict instructions of Major Blasse, 'B' Company were not to appear anywhere in the neighbourhood of the rendez-vous for the main scheme.

¹⁰⁵T. Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers*, p.56.

¹⁰⁶T. Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki*, pp.193 and 197.

The Inspecting-General, the C.O. and second-in-command watched the companies attacking from the high ground at the final objective. All went off well until the assault troops were within about 150 yards of the General and his party. Suddenly, from the left flank, there was a yell from a hundred men simultaneously and through the hedge appeared 'B' Company, who determined not to miss the 'show', charged with fixed bayonets, obliquely to the main attack. For a moment the C.O. and second-in-command seemed dumbfounded by this sudden onslaught, but the Major-General was highly delighted, and said, 'a most carefully planned flank attack, delivered just in the nick of time'. The C.O. said nothing, but probably thought much.¹⁰⁷

Elsewhere, the situation was little better. In July 1915 in a 48th. Brigade wargame the 8th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers attacked the 9th. Royal Munster Fusiliers, by mistake.¹⁰⁸ By June 1915, deficiencies in the 16th. (Irish) Division's training were blindingly obvious. Lieutenant S. E. J. C. Lushington, serving in the 11th. Battalion, Hampshire Regiment, the divisional pioneer unit, noted; "we just heard the very unwelcome news that we have been turned into the 4th. Reserve army which means which [sic] shan't go out for another six months, all because these rotten Irishmen are absolutely hopeless."¹⁰⁹ At about this time, Major Sir Francis Vane commented that the 16th. (Irish) Division had become; "a patchwork of men in different stages of instruction."¹¹⁰

While Parsons must be held responsible for some of the defects in 16th. (Irish) Divisional training, Johnstone's criticisms are, to some extent, unjustified. Firstly, the training of the 36th. (Ulster) Division was not noticeably better; despite its early access

¹⁰⁷G. A. Cooper Walker, The Book of the Seventh Service Battalion, The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, p.5.

¹⁰⁸Entry for 14/7/15, Captain O. L. Beater Diaries, I.W.M., 86/65/1.

¹⁰⁹Letter, Lushington to D. Daubeny, 3/6/15, Miss D. Daubeny papers, I.W.M., 96/37/1.

¹¹⁰F. Vane, Agin the Governments, p.250.

to U.V.F. arms and equipment. David Starret, on arriving at Donard Camp, as a member of the 107th. Brigade, in mid-September 1914 remembered; "Things were topsy-turvy,..., The first two-three days was Babel. My! it was a picnic. Others as well as myself did not know to what they belonged so roamed together in and about the camp."¹¹¹ Indeed, the work schedule in late September was actually less intense than that in the 16th. (Irish) Division, with only five and three-quarters hours work a day.¹¹²

U.V.F. equipment was used in training; most notably Sir James Craig obtained 10,000 uniforms from Moss Brothers in London, for the 36th. (Ulster) Division, paid for out of U.V.F. funds.¹¹³ This meant that, unlike many other New Army units, including the 16th. (Irish) Division, men of the 36th. (Ulster) Division did not have to drill for months in civilian clothes, the infamous "Kitchener blue" uniforms, or obsolete scarlet jackets.¹¹⁴

The use of U.V.F. equipment could, however, be damaging to morale, in some instances. When the 36th. (Ulster) Division fired their final musketry course in England it was with defective ammunition, manufactured in the U.S.A., which compared poorly to many men's experiences with U.V.F. equipment. As Cyril Falls noted; "The writer saw one man, at whose shoulder he had stood on a U.V.F. range while he put five huge bullets from an Italian Veterli into the bull's-eye, miss the target twice at 600 yards."¹¹⁵

Finally, under Major General Powell, the training of the 36th. (Ulster) Division appears to have consisted merely of marching.¹¹⁶ Certainly, when Major General Sir

¹¹¹D. Starret, "Batman", p.5, I.W.M., 79/35/1.

¹¹²*The County Down Spectator and Ulster Standard*, 25/9/14, p.5.

¹¹³P. Buckland, *James Craig*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1980, p.36 and St. John Ervine, *Craigavon; Ulsterman*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1949, p.298.

¹¹⁴C. Falls, *The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division*, p.6 and G. A. Cooper Walker, *The Book of the Seventh Service Battalion, The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers*, p.3.

¹¹⁵C. Falls, *The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division*, p.20.

¹¹⁶*ibid*, pp.13-4.

Oliver Nugent took over command of the division, he felt it to be unfit for front line service.¹¹⁷

The experience of the 36th. (Ulster) Division suggests that Parsons coped, as well as could be expected in the circumstances, with the training of the 16th. (Irish) Division. Johnstone's criticism also ignores another key factor which retarded the training of and, as discussed later, possibly caused discontent in, the 16th. (Irish) Division. This was the serious manpower problems faced in the unit. By March 1915, the 16th. (Irish) Division did, indeed, present a 'patchwork appearance' in terms of unit strengths, as table 4.3, demonstrates.

Table 4.3. Unit Strengths in the 16th. (Irish) Division, March 1915.¹¹⁸

Unit	Strength
47th. Brigade	
6/Royal Irish Regiment	1066
6/Connaught Rangers	1235
7/Leinster Regiment	1078
8/Royal Munster Fusiliers	625
48th. Brigade	
7/Royal Irish Rifles	352
9/Royal Munster Fusiliers	646
8/Royal Dublin Fusiliers	928
9/Royal Dublin Fusiliers	946
49th. Brigade	
7/Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers	406
8/Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers	386
7/Royal Irish Fusiliers	726
8/Royal Irish Fusiliers	679

The varying unit strengths in this division, at this date had a political dimension. Due to Redmond's influence, it had been decided to 'clear' one brigade of

¹¹⁷Letter, Nugent to his wife, 16/10/15, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.3835/E/2/5/12A. Nugent's views of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, on assuming command, are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

¹¹⁸Compiled from T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers, p.50.

the 16th. (Irish) Division in October 1914 to be filled up with men recruited from the I.N.V.. Parsons had selected the 47th. Infantry Brigade for this dubious honour, presumably as its units had the largest geographical catchment areas.¹¹⁹ As can be seen from the unit strengths, this clearing scheme certainly provided a flood of recruits for the 47th. Infantry Brigade.

However, while some of Parsons's battalions were thus politically favoured, others were not as fortunate. The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Royal Irish Rifles and Royal Irish Fusiliers were all linked, in nationalist eyes, with the 36th. (Ulster) Division.¹²⁰ The bizarre result of this was that Derry I.N.V. members, from the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers regimental area, enlisted in large numbers in the 6th. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment and Belfast I.N.V. members, from the Royal Irish Rifles regimental district, enlisted in the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers and 7th. Battalion, Leinster Regiment.¹²¹

Parsons's attempt to equalise the numbers of men in his battalions ran into immediate difficulties. R. J. Tennant mistakenly believed that when Parsons transferred men from the 47th. to the 49th. Infantry Brigades, he was forcing I.N.V. members to serve with U.V.F. personnel.¹²² Parsons replied, noting that he had been ordered to clear the 47th. Infantry Brigade for I.N.V. and that this had led to difficulties;

These poor ill used men [referring to I.N.V. from Enniskillen who had initially joined the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers and then been divided

¹¹⁹Parsons's diary entries for 12/10/14, 17/10/14, 23/10/14 and 30/10/14, Parsons' papers, N.L.I., Ms.21,524. In his entry for the 17th. October, Parsons opined that the clearing scheme was; "all d[amne]d rot."

¹²⁰S. Gwynn, *John Redmond's Last Years*, pp.194-5 and E. Mercer, "For King, Country and a Shilling a Day", p.12. Parsons complained that; "the unfortunate Tipperary Brigade has been regarded as an Orange Brigade, even by people who ought to have known better", letter, Parsons to Redmond, 6/5/15, Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms.15,261(3).

¹²¹S. Gwynn, *John Redmond's Last Years*, p.177.

¹²²Letter, Tennant to Parsons, 26/2/15, Parsons papers, N.L.I., Ms.21,278.

amongst all battalions in the 47th. Brigade] have been asked to Volunteer [to transfer to the 49th. Brigade] + 487 have volunteered to go though I am only sending 250.

I cannot tell what 'the dominating Political Sentiment' is in the 7th. + 8th. Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers is as in the Army [no details?] of Political faiths are recorded. The largely predominating religious faith is Roman Catholic; which perhaps gives a clue to the other.

What would Lord K.[itchener] say if he saw my returns of strength showing some Battalions as 1,300 strong, others 400!¹²³

This situation became increasingly complicated for Parsons, when, in March 1915 the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles received six officers and 225 other ranks from the Jersey Militia, the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, men from the Guernsey Militia and the 6th. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, a complete company and machine gun section of the Guernsey Militia.¹²⁴ The former must have been welcome to battalions which were all but failing. The latter, however, were a mixed blessing; not only had the Guernsey Militia company been posted to the strongest battalion in the Division by the War Office, but the fact that the Guernsey Militia had been disbanded in 1896 due to a mutiny,¹²⁵ suggested that this company would not provide a stabilising influence in the 16th. (Irish) Division.

Parsons was also under pressure, from John Redmond, given the weakness of some units in the 16th. (Irish) Division, to apply for the Tyneside Irish Brigade to join

¹²³Letter, Parsons to Tennant, 27/2/15, Parsons papers, N.L.I., MS.21,278.

¹²⁴C. Falls, The History of the First Seven Battalions, The Royal Irish Rifles (now the Royal Ulster Rifles) in the Great War, Gale and Polden Ltd., Aldershot, 1925, vol.II, p.20,

S. Geoghegan, The Campaigns and History of the Royal Irish Regiment, vol.II: From 1900 to 1922, William Blackwood & Sons Ltd., Edinburgh and London, 1927, p.111, E. Parks, The Royal Guernsey Militia; A Short History and List of Officers, La Societe Guernesiaise, St. Peter Port, Guernsey, 1992, p.22 and E. Parks, "Guernsey's Contribution to the 16th. (Irish) Division", The Irish Sword, vol.XVIII, no.73, 1992.

¹²⁵E. Parks, The Royal Guernsey Militia, pp.20-1.

this formation.¹²⁶ Parsons managed to alienate much nationalist support by stating that Irishmen living in British industrial cities; “are slum-birds that we don’t want. I want to see the clean, fine, strong, temperate, hurley-playing country fellows such as we used to get in the Munsters, Royal Irish, Connaught Rangers.”¹²⁷

Another controversy over the manning of the 16th. (Irish) Division came in June 1915 when the division had to send 1,200 men to the 10th. (Irish) Division to complete it for overseas service.¹²⁸ Redmond was incensed that these men were all drawn from the 49th. Brigade; “which was the one Brigade of the Division undermanned.”¹²⁹ This loss of manpower led to serious concerns amongst Nationalist politicians that this brigade, if not the entire 16th. (Irish) Division, would be used as a draft finding body.¹³⁰

This decision also condemned the 49th. Infantry Brigade to an uncertain future. As one officer in the 8th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers stated;

In the autumn of ‘15 we were again a respectable fighting unit. We were clothed in khaki and equipped for war; and in the late August we left Newry for Pirbright en route, as we thought, for France. The days at Pirbright dragged on into weeks. We fired our course at Bisley, and then fired it again. We were introduced to weird and cunning engines of war - the Leach catapult, the West Spring Gun, and a crop of others as fantastic. We marched from Pirbright to Witley in the rain, and having got there we sold our cap badges to the Canadians. We marched from Witley to Bordon in the

¹²⁶D. Gwynn, *The Life of John Redmond*, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., London, 1932, pp.403-4. On the formation and career of the Tyneside Irish Brigade see, F. Forde, “Tyneside Irish Brigade”, *The Irish Sword*, Vol. XVI, 1984.

¹²⁷D. Gwynn, *The Life of John Redmond*, p.400. This quote is apparently taken from a letter sent by Parsons to Mr. Crilly, The Secretary of the United Irish League of Great Britain.

¹²⁸T. Denman, *Ireland’s Unknown Soldiers*, p.55.

¹²⁹Letter, Redmond to General H. C. Sclater, Adjutant-General, War Office, 9/8/15, Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms.15,225.

¹³⁰Letter, Redmond to Sclater, 27/7/15, Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms.15,225.

rain and fought a battle with French Canadians. We drilled and manoeuvred and got thoroughly restless, disgruntled and fed-up; for the rest of the Division, who had not been denuded of their early men, had long gone abroad. Finally, about the 1st. of February, 1916, all the rumours came true, orders arrived, and we set out for France.¹³¹

The political nature of the 36th. (Ulster) Division also affected its recruiting policy. Some units in this division were perfectly happy to accept Catholic recruits, for example, the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles had five officers and ninety-eight other ranks serving in it during this period, who were Catholics.¹³² However, the case of P. J. Kelly highlighted the sectarian nature of some units in the 36th. (Ulster) Division. Kelly alleged that he had enlisted into the Royal Engineers in Londonderry and had then been sent to join a Royal Engineer unit in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, based in Belfast. When the officer there took his details and discovered that Kelly was a Catholic, he stated that Kelly could only join the unit if he changed his religion. Kelly refused to do so, whereupon the officer announced that the unit had no vacancies and discharged Kelly.¹³³

This incident appears to have caused serious embarrassment to the War Office, who traced Kelly to Noble's Explosive Works in Ayrshire and invited him to return to Londonderry and re-enlist. Kelly did so and was sent to the Royal Engineers depot at Chatham.¹³⁴

Ulster Unionists saw no need to apologise over this affair. The Unionist, *Belfast News Letter*, carried an editorial suggesting that Kelly's case was a fabrication and ending with the singularly unconvincing suggestion that, as no complaint had been

¹³¹M. Cunliffe, *The Royal Irish Fusiliers, 1793-1950*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1952, p.300.

¹³²Details from, "Membership of the 14/Royal Irish Rifles (Y.C.V.)", Royal Ulster Rifles Museum.

¹³³*The Irish News*, 12/4/15, p.6.

¹³⁴*ibid*, 16/4/15, p.4.

made to any officer of the Royal Engineers in Belfast, there was clearly no case to answer.¹³⁵ An unrepentant letter from Richard Dawson Bates, the Secretary of the Ulster Unionist Council, did not even attempt to deny that the Kelly incident was fabricated, pointing out that Catholics could join the regular army or 16th. (Irish) Division with ease. Dawson Bates went on to state that there were only fifteen Catholics in the entire 36th. (Ulster) Division and these were all sergeant instructors, sent by the War Office.¹³⁶ This blatant piece of misinformation, with the implication that Catholics were not welcome in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, can have done little to improve either the morale of Catholics serving in the division, or, indeed, recruitment for some of the rural battalions of the division which had not reached their establishment.

One final issue which caused discontent in New Army units was the poor accommodation arrangements. As in the rest of Britain, many old barracks were utilised for the New Army battalions. Equally, a number of hastily constructed tented or hutted camps were built to accommodate these troops. Finally, a number of men were billeted in private houses and public buildings, an issue which caused particular controversy in Ireland.

Many battalions were formed and quartered during most of their training in barracks in Ireland. For example, from its formation in September 1914 until August 1915 the 7th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers was quartered in Tipperary Barracks.¹³⁷ Equally, the entire 31st. Infantry Brigade was housed in the Dublin Barracks from August 1914, until the 10th. (Irish) Division moved to Aldershot.¹³⁸ Irish barracks suffered from a number of defects in comparison to their equivalents in Great Britain. Most were a great deal smaller than their counterparts as the use of

¹³⁵*Belfast News Letter*, 14/4/15, p.12.

¹³⁶*ibid.* As Dawson Bates never held any military rank, let alone in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, it is unclear how he would have been in a position to know how many men of the Roman Catholic faith were serving in this formation.

¹³⁷G. A. Cooper Walker, *The Book of the Seventh Service Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers*, p.10.

¹³⁸T. Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki*, p.89.

soldiers for policing duties saw regiments based in Ireland in the nineteenth century, widely dispersed, and few were capable of accommodating a full battalion.¹³⁹ In addition, most Irish barracks were much older than the British average, most having been constructed between 1786 and 1813,¹⁴⁰ some were even older, the Royal Barracks in Dublin dating from 1697.¹⁴¹

Many of these old barracks were not only cramped, but had serious sanitation defects. In 1859 the Army Sanitary Committee had inspected Dublin barracks, describing them as; “an excellent illustration of what ought to be avoided in barrack construction”.¹⁴² Minor alterations were made to these barracks, but in 1889 Dublin’s Royal Barracks still had poor sanitation, hygiene and ventilation.¹⁴³ It would appear that conditions had not changed considerably by 1914.¹⁴⁴ The situation was little better at Birr Barracks, where insanitary conditions led to an outbreak of “spotted fever”. This led to four deaths in the 11th. Battalion, Hampshire Regiment.¹⁴⁵

If barracks could be insanitary and overcrowded, many tented and hutted camps were little better in terms of the degree of comfort they provided for the troops. As an extreme example, in Autumn 1914 a severe storm levelled the 109th. Brigade camp at Finner.¹⁴⁶ Similar conditions at Donard camp led to a mutiny in early winter

¹³⁹E. M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1902*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1992, pp.216-7. This comment is also based on the author’s visits to the old barracks at Enniskillen (now the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers’ Museum) and Fermoy.

¹⁴⁰E. M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.216.

¹⁴¹J. M. Brereton, *The British Soldier; A Social History from 1661 to the Present Day*, The Bodley Head, London, 1986, p.10.

¹⁴²Report of the Army Sanitary Committee, 1861, p.15, cited, A. R. Skelly, *The Victorian Army at Home; The Recruitment and Terms and Conditions of the British Regular, 1859-1899*, Croom Helm, London, 1977, p.38.

¹⁴³ibid, p.39.

¹⁴⁴Indeed the Royal Barracks (renamed Collins Barracks in 1922) is still in existence today. The Irish army vacated them in 1998 and they are now part of the Irish National Museum. This is despite the fact that in 1886 army authorities recommended the demolition of a number of buildings in these barracks, ibid, p.38.

¹⁴⁵Letter, Lieutenant S. E. J. C. Lushington to Miss D. Daubeny, 18/2/15, Daubeny papers, I.W.M., 96/37/1.

¹⁴⁶G. Mitchell, *Three Cheers for the Derrys! A History of the 10th. Royal Inniskilling*

1914, when tents began to collapse due to heavy rain. A number of men of the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles left the camp, stating that they were returning home, to Belfast. Colonel Wallace and Major F. P. Crozier rode after the men, and they all agreed to return when these officers promised them new billets. No disciplinary action was taken against these men.¹⁴⁷ Meanwhile, by July 1915, Captain O. L. Beater noted of the camp inhabited by the 9th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, near Buttevant; "This camp is getting into a very unhealthy state [due to heavy rain] and fairly stinks. The sooner they shift us the better."¹⁴⁸

The billeting of men on private houses during the Great War was a controversial issue throughout the United Kingdom.¹⁴⁹ However, in Ireland, billeting attained sectarian overtones. In September 1914 when Clondeboy camp was flooded by heavy rain, the 11th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles were billeted in Lisburn. This led to accusations that an outrageously large number of men were billeted on nationalist homes.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, many men, billeted on their own families, enjoyed this experience, not only could they live at home, but their families received the government's generous billeting allowance.¹⁵¹

The billeting of men in public buildings caused other problems. When the 110th. Brigade's tented accommodation was levelled by storms at Finner in Autumn 1914, the 9th., 10th. and 11th. Battalions, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers simply had to re-erect their tents and stayed there throughout the winter. By contrast, following this disaster, the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, moved to hotels in Ballyshannon;

Fusiliers, Yes! Publications, Derry, 1991, p.24.

¹⁴⁷D. Starret, "Batman", p.13, I.W.M., 79/35/1.

¹⁴⁸Entry for 31/7/15, Captain O. L. Beater diaries, I.W.M., 86/65/1.

¹⁴⁹P. Simkins, "Soldiers and civilians; billeting in Britain and France", in I. F. W. Beckett and K. Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Arms*, pp.166-87.

¹⁵⁰Wilfrid Spender papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.1295/2, cited, P. Orr, *The Road to the Somme*, p.55.

¹⁵¹J. H. Stewart, "Random Recollections", p.5, I.W.M..

The Y.[oung] C.[itizen] V.[olunteers] [14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles] were from the more affluent families of Belfast and there was a certain degree of antagonism between them and the men from the west of Ulster, many of whom were from very poor homes. It would take a long time before they were fully accepted by the rest of the Brigade.¹⁵²

Other recruits were quartered in less salubrious public accommodation. Given the basic working class dislike of the Poor Law,¹⁵³ one cannot imagine that men of the 49th. Brigade were overjoyed at being housed in Tipperary workhouse.

A number of breaches of discipline occurred in the Irish New Army divisions during training. The worst of these were mutinies, of which at least nine took place during this period. Absenteeism was another serious problem, especially in the 10th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions, when men were quartered near their homes. Drunkenness was a persistent problem and resulted in action from both the local and military authorities. However, it appears that none of these military crimes was of a political nature. In 1915 the Athgorvan company of the Irish Volunteers was spectacularly unsuccessful in attempting to purchase rifles from Irish soldiers training at the Curragh camp.¹⁵⁴

As with other New Army divisions, the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions contended with a number of mutinies during their training.¹⁵⁵ However, uniquely, men in the 16th. (Irish) Division were actually tried and found guilty of mutiny by courts martial.¹⁵⁶ On the 17th. June 1915, Lance Corporal J. Austin of the

¹⁵²G. Mitchell, "Three Cheers for the Derrys!" A History of the 10th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, p.24.

¹⁵³T. Johnstone, Orange, Green and Khaki, p.192. On the widespread dislike of the Poor Law see, J. Benson, The Working Class in Britain, 1850-1939, Longman, London, 1989, p.49.

¹⁵⁴C. Costello, A Most Delightful Station: The British Army on the Curragh of Kildare, Ireland, 1855-1922, The Collins Press, Cork, 1996, p.290.

¹⁵⁵P. Simkins, Kitchener's Army, pp.239-44.

¹⁵⁶P.R.O., WO86/65, p.77 (case of J. Austin, 8th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, tried on 17/6/15) and WO86/66, p.111.

8th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, was tried at Tipperary for mutiny by a District Court Martial and sentenced to eighty-four days detention. Meanwhile, on the 6th. September 1915, seven privates of the 8th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers were tried for mutiny and drunkenness at Enniskillen, they were each sentenced to one year hard labour. Unfortunately the case transcripts, or indeed any contemporary accounts of these incidents do not survive. Nevertheless, it is possible to posit, with some certainty, the reasons why these mutinies occurred.

Both of these mutinies took place in the 49th. Brigade, which had the most serious recruiting problems in any Irish New Army unit. The mutiny in the 8th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers (and it would appear that Lance Corporal Austin was the ringleader, as no other men were tried for mutiny, whereas, by its very definition, a mutiny must be a combination of two or more men) occurred in June 1915, the very time when the 49th. Brigade had to send 1,200 men to the 10th. (Irish) Division.¹⁵⁷ The result of this was, not only to split up men who had joined the army, on the explicit understanding that they would serve together, but to disperse the brigade, as battalions were sent to Ulster to recruit.

The mutiny in the 8th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers would appear to have occurred for similar reasons, with the added grievance that, by September 1915 it appeared that the 49th. Brigade was being converted into a draft finding unit. Indeed, it is possible that even by this date, men in the brigade were aware that they would not accompany the rest of the 16th. (Irish) Division overseas.¹⁵⁸

A number of other incidents which can properly be described as mutinies occurred in the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions during their training. While

¹⁵⁷T. Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers*, p.55.

¹⁵⁸While the 47th. and 48th. Brigades went to France in November 1915, the 49th. Brigade did not embark until February 1916. T. Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki*, p.198. Also, in August 1915, the divisional artillery, engineers and field ambulances had been transferred to the newly formed Guards Division, which must have accentuated fears that the 16th. (Irish) Division would never serve overseas as a composite unit, T. Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers*, pp.55-6.

no men were court martialled for their part in these incidents, at least a clearer picture is available as to why they occurred.

The unit most dogged with mutinies during this time was the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers. It would appear that mutinies occurred in this battalion on the 23rd. October 1914, another, later in October 1914 and, finally, one on the 24th. or 25th. December 1914.¹⁵⁹ The most serious of these was that occurring in late October, as the then Sergeant Staniforth observed;

We had a fearful mutiny last week. The prisoners in the guard-room and cells (50 men, all drunk) rose again - this is not the row I was telling you about last time, but another - and got possession of the place and smashed it to splinters, and then sallied out armed with bayonets upon the crowd outside. For about a quarter of an hour there was all hell let loose: bayonets going and bricks flying, until they could get the fire-hose limbered up and turn on to them. That settled them, but there were six men lying unconscious, and many more bleeding from small wounds. Two subsequently died in hospital, one from a stick of a bayonet and one from a bang of a brick over the heart. We had a frightful kick-up over it next day; they brought the General over from Mallow to curse us.¹⁶⁰

Despite these fatalities, Parsons decided not to institute courts martial proceedings, as he noted in his diary; "Motored to Fermoy on getting news of drunken row in [6th. Battalion] Connaught Rangers. Made a speech to N.C.O.s of [6th. Battalion]Connaught Rangers and [7th. Battalion] Royal Irish Rifles and then to men

¹⁵⁹J. H. M. Staniforth, letters to his parents, 24/10/14, 1/11/14 and 25/12/14, cited in J. H. M. Staniforth, "Kitchener's Soldier", pp. 14-5, 23 and 35-6, I.W.M., 67/41/1.

¹⁶⁰Letter, Staniforth to his parents, 1/11/14, cited in "Kitchener's Soldier, 1914-18", p.23, I.W.M., 67/41/1.

and gave them pepper.”¹⁶¹ It would appear from this comment that similar problems had occurred in the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles.

Staniforth believed that the first two mutinies were simply drunken brawls which got out of hand. The third mutiny in the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, occurred on either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day 1914 and appears to have been written off, simply as seasonal high spirits. On this occasion the men invaded the mess, while the officers were having dinner, and carried them outside. The officers then had to ‘orate’ to the men before being returned to their quarters.¹⁶²

Parsons possibly refused to institute courts martial in these cases as the C.O. of the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, Lieutenant Colonel John Lenox-Conyngham, had been personally recommended for his command by Parsons, himself.¹⁶³ However, having said this, Stephen Gwynn, M.P., while serving as an officer in the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, certainly believed Lenox-Conyngham to be an efficient C.O..¹⁶⁴ Indeed, Lieutenant Colonel John Lenox-Conyngham must have been viewed as an efficient C.O. by his superiors, as he survived the purge of senior officers carried out by the War Office and Major General W. B. Hickie, before and shortly after the 16th. (Irish) Division arrived in France, and was killed in action, leading his battalion at Guillemont in 1916.¹⁶⁵

In the 36th. (Ulster) Division, at least three mutinies took place during the division’s training. That in the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, over poor accommodation, has already been referred to. Another mutiny occurred in the 14th.

¹⁶¹Entry of 2/11/14 in Parsons’s diary, Parsons papers, N.L.I., Ms.21,524. It is worth noting that a mutiny in the 1st. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in 1887 appears to have been similarly dismissed as a “drunken row”. See G. Dominy, “More than just a ‘Drunken Brawl’? The Mystery of the Mutiny of the Inniskilling Fusiliers at Fort Napier, 1887”, *Southern African-Irish Studies*, I, 1991.

¹⁶²Letter, Staniforth to his parents, 25/12/14, cited, “Kitchener’s Soldier, 1914-18”, Staniforth papers, I.W.M., 67/41/1.

¹⁶³Entry of 2/10/14 in Parsons’s diary, Parsons papers, N.L.I., Ms.21,524.

¹⁶⁴Comments by Gwynn, cited in M. Lenox-Coyngnam, *An Old Ulster House and the people who lived in it*, Dundalgan Press, Dundalk, 1946, p.225.

¹⁶⁵ibid, p.224.

Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, following manoeuvres by the 109th. Brigade in the Antrim hills, between the 9th. and 11th. of June, 1915. The men of the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, refused to march back to Shane's Castle camp, insisting on a train being provided. The battalion's C.O., Lieutenant Colonel Robert Chichester diffused the situation by conceding to this demand and chartering a train. No man in the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles received any official punishment for this action, but from then on the other battalions in the brigade (the 9th., 10th. and 11th. Battalions, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers) referred to them as; "Chocolate Soldiers".¹⁶⁶

Much more serious was the mass mutiny of the 36th. (Ulster) Division in early September 1915. At this time a number of battalions of the division mutinied as they believed that they were to be sent immediately overseas, without home leave first. Rifleman J. MacRoberts related how this situation was diffused in the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles;

One evening a rumour reached us from the huts that no leave was going to be granted before going to the front, and that several of the battalions had - to use the only possible word - mutinied. That night we were paraded and addressed by Major B---, at that moment in a lamentable, intoxicated state.

If we did not get leave he said, we were not to mutiny, no matter what other battalions might do and what they might say about us. We had joined the army for King and Country and had undertaken to obey its rules and commands. This was the first war most of us had been in and probably it would be the last, thus it behaved [sic] us to abide by the rules like men. So let us play the game and to hell with the Pope. The proceedings were a

¹⁶⁶G. Mitchell, "Three Cheers for the Derrys!" A History of the 10th. Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, p.29 and P. Orr, The Road to the Somme, p.64.

scandal and a shame to the British Army, but the reckless, dare-all manner of the Major had a great influence with the troops.¹⁶⁷

Throughout the 36th. (Ulster) Division, the mutiny was quelled by granting every man four days home leave, before the division went to France, starting on the 15th. September 1915.¹⁶⁸

Table 4.4, overleaf, demonstrates, as in table 3.2, the sheer difference in number of courts martial held in units serving in similar circumstances. However, some anomalies can be explained. The 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles had a very small number of courts martial during this period, as the battalion's adjutant, Captain Bentley, refused to refer absent without leave cases to courts martial.¹⁶⁹ Also, the difference between the courts martial records of the 6th. and 8th. Battalions of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers may be explained, partly, by the different social classes represented¹⁷⁰ and partly by the proximity in which the 6th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers were stationed to Dublin. Henry de Montmorency, serving as a captain in the 7th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, along with the 6th. Battalion of the regiment in 30th. Brigade stated;

It is quite true that the Irishmen in my battalion have been recruited from the poorest, unskilled casual labourers of Dublin, the lowest strata of our society

¹⁶⁷Diary of Rifleman J. MacRoberts, 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, pp.63-4, Liddle Collection. The officer referred to was Major H. C. J. Bliss, who had been a Captain in the Royal Irish Fusiliers before the war, War Office, The Monthly Army List for December 1915, H.M.S.O., London, 1915, column 1496d.

¹⁶⁸ibid, p.64.

¹⁶⁹Anon, "Service with the 14th. Battalion, R.[oyal] I.[rish] Rif[le]s. (Y.C.V.), 1914-18", p.61, Royal Ulster Rifles' Museum.

¹⁷⁰I would like to thank Mr. Tom Burke of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association for showing me his work in progress, which suggests that men killed while serving in the 6th. Battalion of the regiment were born overwhelmingly in largely working class areas of Dublin, while those of the 8th. Battalion came, in many cases, from lower middle class backgrounds.

Table 4.4 Offences for which men serving in sample Service, Special Reserve and General Reserve battalions were tried, while training in the U.K.¹⁷¹

Offence	8	10	9	13	14	6	6	8	3	3	4	18
	R	R	R.	R.	R.				R.	R.		R.
	Inns.	Inns.	L	L	L	C.R.	RDF	RDF	Regt.	Rifs.	RDF	Rifs.
	F	T	Rifs.	Rifs.	Rifs.							
War Treason	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D.O.R.A.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Offence against an inhabitant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mutiny	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cowardice	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Desertion	1	0	12	0	1	1	2	6	6	10	6	4
Absence	2	1	8	1	0	0	65	1	5	6	5	1
Striking or violent	6	1	1	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0
Insubordination	2	3	1	0	0	2	6	0	2	1	0	0
Disobedience	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Quitting post	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Drunkenness	1	1	2	0	0	2	2	0	9	3	2	0
Injuring property	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Loss of property	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Theft	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	0	3	0	0	0
Indecency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Resisting escort	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Escaping confinement	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Misc. and multiple offences	31	11	21	3	4	33	38	9	37	38	21	7
Misc. civil offences	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Self-inflicted wound	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fraudulent enlistment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
Enlisting after discharge	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
False answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Neglect	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fraud	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	43	18	47	9	5	44	115	17	70	60	34	13

¹⁷¹The cases considered in the case of service battalions, are those which occurred between the formation of the unit and its embarkation for overseas. The cases totalled for the 3rd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, 3rd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles and 4th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, occurred between the 4/8/14 and 30/9/15. The cases totalled for the 18th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, a general reserve unit, are from its formation in early 1915 until the 30/9/15.

- and there has been undoubtedly a great deal of absence without leave, but absence without leave is a purely military offence, it is not immoral, besides the prevalence of this 'crime' is, in no small measure, due to the men being stationed within reach of Dublin i.e. within reach of temptation,..., If the authorities had exercised a little tact and had quartered these Irishmen in England, Scotland, or in some remote part of Ireland, they might never have been guilty of absence to the extent complained of. As a result, numbers of Irishmen, who would make splendid soldiers when it comes to fighting, have been discharged as incorrigible on account of continual absence without leave.¹⁷²

As always, the courts martial records do not provide a complete picture of disciplinary problems. As already noted the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, did not try absent without leave cases by courts martial. This appears to have been widespread in the 36th. (Ulster) Division as a whole, since as Cyril Falls noted, one of the most serious disciplinary problems in the division;

was that of week-end leave. The great bulk of the men of the 107th. and 108th. Brigades and most of the Divisional Troops were training near their homes. They could not understand why they should be kept in camp doing nothing on Sundays when they might have been visiting them. Though leave was given generously enough, this remained a sore point till the Division moved to England. Apart from 'absence without leave' there was no crime to speak of.¹⁷³

¹⁷²Letter, de Montmorency to John Redmond, 24/1/15, Redmond papers, National Library of Ireland, Ms. 15,261(2). In the same letter, de Montmorency alleged that the officers in his battalion, who were mainly English, were unsympathetic to the other ranks, and had them court martialled at every available opportunity.

¹⁷³C. Falls, The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, p.13.

By contrast, Table 4.4 shows relatively few absent without leave cases in the sample battalions of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, viz.; the 9th., 13th. and 14th. Battalions, Royal Irish Rifles and the 10th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. It should be noted that even absent without leave cases were seen as potentially political crimes in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, as it appears that the War Office moved the division to England in early July 1915, partly due to the fears that many men would desert to take part in Orange Order parades on the 12th. July, if the formation remained in Ireland.¹⁷⁴

In terms of punishments, as detailed in table 4.5, overleaf, there are three points worthy of note. Firstly, Special Reserve battalions, generally, had more men sentenced to hard labour than service battalions. This is an indication of the tolerance with which the military authorities treated the “temporary soldiers” of the New Armies. Secondly, a large number of men tried in the 13th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, were found not guilty. This is explained by the fact that four soldiers charged with rape were all acquitted. Finally, the number of quashed or not confirmed cases in the 10th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers is abnormally high. This reflects the number of men incorrectly tried by Field General Courts Martial, while serving in the United Kingdom.

Of course, while training in the United Kingdom, soldiers could also be tried by civil law for various offences. A case-study of the 108th. Brigade, 36th. (Ulster) Division, during its training at Clandeboye camp, in County Down, demonstrates the actions taken against this formation by the civil authorities. Drunkenness was an offence which the civil authorities were keen to act on. On the 28th. October 1914, the local magistrates, gathered at Bangor Petty Sessions, agreed to a request by District Inspector Gerrity, Royal Irish Constabulary, that all Public Houses in Bangor should close at eight o’clock in the evening on Saturdays.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴J. H. Stewart-Moore, “Random Recollections”, p.10, I.W.M. and P. Orr, *The Road to the Somme*, p.78.

¹⁷⁵*County Down Spectator and Ulster Standard*, 30/10/14, p.5.

Table 4.5 Sentences passed by courts martial, relating to sample service, special reserve and general reserve units, serving in the United Kingdom, 1914-16, (dates as per table 4.4).

Sentences	8/RInF	10/RInF	9/RIRfs	13/RIRfs	14/RIRfs	6/CR	6/RDF	8/RDF	3/RIRgt	3/RIRfs	4/RDF	18/RIRfs
Death	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Penal Servitude	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hard Labour	21	1	2	0	2	5	20	1	18	12	0	0
Imprisonment	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	0
Detention	16	6	32	4	3	30	74	10	35	39	26	11
F.P.1	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
F.P.2	0	1	0	1	0	2	8	5	1	1	0	0
Discharged with ignominy/cashiered	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Reduced or reprimanded	1	0	10	0	0	2	5	0	10	2	4	1
Stoppages, fines, etc.	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Quashed/ not confirmed	1	8	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	3	3	0
Suspended sentence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not guilty, acquitted, etc.	1	2	1	4	0	3	0	0	3	1	1	1
TOTAL	43	18	47	9	5	44	115	17	70	60	34	13

A fight between two civilians and unidentified soldiers on the 6th. March 1915, at Conlig Public House, led to the two civilians concerned being fined five shillings each, with recognisances of five pounds, and the public house being closed to troops at all times.¹⁷⁶

No soldier at Clandeboye camp during this period was tried by the civil authorities for drunkenness, and this would appear to be as a result of intimidation of the police by the troops. W. Moore, writing to the local paper stated; "One of the magistrates told me,..., that he saw a young fellow lying hopelessly drunk, but as his comrades had charge of him the police did not interfere."¹⁷⁷ Certainly, at Finner camp, County Donegal, men of the 10th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers clashed with Royal Irish Constabulary officers in April 1915, resulting in three men being tried by courts martial.¹⁷⁸

Other, more serious cases, however, were dealt with by the civil authorities. On the 10th. March 1915, at Bangor Petty Sessions, Private Brice Stewart, otherwise John Brown, was prosecuted by the Royal Irish Constabulary for making a false entry on his attestation form. The accused had deserted from the 6th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles and then enlisted in the 11th. Battalion of the same regiment. He was found guilty and sentenced to one months imprisonment.¹⁷⁹ Under the 1881 Army Act it was at the military authorities discretion whether this offence should be tried by court martial or a civil court.¹⁸⁰ This was the only case of a soldier serving in the 108th. Brigade being tried by the civil courts while the brigade was stationed at Clandeboye, possibly as it was a case which contained a number of legal technicalities, which it was felt the inexperienced New Army officers would be unable to deal with.

¹⁷⁶ibid, 26/3/15, p.8.

¹⁷⁷ibid, 14/5/15, p.5.

¹⁷⁸For further details see appendix 8 (the Irish Home Service database), cases of Privates, Loughrey, Mc Guinness and Wray, 10th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

¹⁷⁹*County Down Spectator and Ulster Standard*, 12/3/15, p.5.

¹⁸⁰H. Humphreys, *The Justice of the Peace for Ireland*, Hodges, Figgis & Co., Dublin, 1890, p.12.

One military crime, which had been a constant problem in the British army, namely the contraction of venereal disease, appears to have been practically absent from the Irish New Army divisions while they were training in Ireland. Apart from the Curragh camp, where prostitutes were a well established local feature by 1914,¹⁸¹ few provincial towns in Ireland provided such dubious delights. F. P. Crozier noted that men of the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, only began to visit prostitutes when the battalion moved to Seaford in England. As he noted;

My attention was first called to the trouble by the entry of a very efficient young officer into a private hospital where an operation was performed. He was only eighteen years of age. At first I thought he had fallen a victim to venereal disease, but on making enquiries I found out he had submitted to an operation because he had injured himself while indulging himself for the first time, at a high-class brothel which was conducted on very select and exclusive lines at a private house.¹⁸²

Crozier reacted by arranging for a supply of disinfectants to be made available for his men, after they had visited brothels.¹⁸³

A number of the measures which had proved successful in maintaining morale in Irish units on the Western Front were adopted by the Irish service battalions during their training. Sports were an important element of this process. The 16th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles established regimental rugby and cricket teams at an early date and played against a number of local and school teams.¹⁸⁴ On a larger scale, the 108th. Brigade held a sports day in Bangor on the 17th. April 1915. This included events such as, 100 yards, one mile and three mile races, the long jump and tug of war. This

¹⁸¹C. Costello, *A Most Delightful Station*, p.171.

¹⁸²F. P. Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, p.49.

¹⁸³*ibid*, p.50.

¹⁸⁴S. N. White, *The Terrors, 16th. (Pioneer) Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles*, p.15.

event was open to the public and the band of the 13th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles performed, while Riflemen Saunders and Montgomery and Lance Corporal Rule of the same battalion, entertained the crowd, dressed as clowns.¹⁸⁵

Even at this early date, other measures had been taken to reinforce morale, some battalion comforts funds had been formed,¹⁸⁶ and the Young Mens' Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.) had established canteens and huts at the various military camps. Indeed, Major-General Powell, G.O.C. of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, was so impressed with the work of the latter that he wrote to Mr. Black, the Y.M.C.A. organiser in Belfast;

I cannot tell you how greatly the Ulster Division is indebted to you and your Association for the excellent work you have carried out in the several Camps of this Division. You have been the means of cheering the men up many an evening during the monotony of their lives in camp; you have kept many a man away from drink and evil living, and no one realises this more than do the men who have benefited.¹⁸⁷

Individuals and organisations also provided entertainments for the troops. For example, on the 26th. January 1915, the entire 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, was admitted, free of charge, to a concert in Randalstown, where Percy French, the famous Ulster singer, songwriter and artist, was the star performer.¹⁸⁸ Meanwhile, in Bangor,

¹⁸⁵*The County Down Spectator and Ulster Standard*, 23/4/15, p.5.

¹⁸⁶Colonel F. J. M. Mc Crory, *The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division; The 10th. Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (The Derrys)*, p.5, unpublished manuscript, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers' Museum.

¹⁸⁷Letter, (undated, but c. July 1915), Powell to Black, cited, W. E. Dorman, *1850-1950, One Hundred Eventful Years, An outline history of the City of Belfast Y.M.C.A.*, Nicholson & Bass Ltd., Belfast, 1950, p.44.

¹⁸⁸J. MacRoberts's papers, p.5, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds.

County Down, local citizens enabled Trinity Hall to be made available, as a recreational facility, to men of the 108th. Brigade.¹⁸⁹

Military bands were also seen as an important method to maintain morale. However, when Lord Kitchener sanctioned the New Army divisions he made no official provision for these. Nevertheless, private initiatives insured that most Irish service battalions did secure a band of some description. By January 1915 the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, had no less than three bands; a bugle, pipe and flute.¹⁹⁰ Following an approach by Major Sir Francis Vane, Gordon Selfridge, of the famous London department store, provided instruments for the 9th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers.¹⁹¹ Finally, and most famously, John Redmond presented a band to each battalion in the 16th. (Irish) Division.¹⁹²

Finally, in terms of morale in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, the influence of one organisation, the Orange Order, must be considered. How many battalions in the division possessed Orange Lodges is unclear,¹⁹³ certainly there was one in the 9th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers from 1915 to 1919, which came under the jurisdiction of the Ballymena District in County Antrim,¹⁹⁴ and Loyal Orange Lodge number 865 was formed in the 16th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles.¹⁹⁵ As there was

¹⁸⁹*The County Down Spectator and Ulster Standard*, 27/11/14, p.5.

¹⁹⁰J. MacRoberts's papers, p.2, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds.

¹⁹¹F. Vane, *Agin the Governments*, pp.253-4.

¹⁹²Letter, Redmond to General H. C. Sclater, 8/7/15, Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms., 15,225.

¹⁹³The only academic study of the Orange Order is H. Senior, *Orangeism in Ireland and Britain, 1795-1836*, Routledge, Kegan and Paul, London, 1966. On the Orange Order in the twentieth century see, M. W. Dewar, J. Brown and S. E. Long, *Orangeism; a new historical appreciation*, the Grand Lodge of Ireland, Belfast, 1969 and T. Gray, *The Orange Order*, The Bodley Head, London, 1972. Unfortunately, neither of these make any reference to Orange Lodges in the 36th. (Ulster) Division. The Grand Lodge of Ireland claim to have minute books of the military lodges which were active on the Western Front between 1914 and 1918, unfortunately, I was denied access to these.

¹⁹⁴J. Brown, *Orangeism Around Ballymena*, Mid Antrim Historical Group, Ballymena, 1990, p.9.

¹⁹⁵S. N. White, *The Terrors, 16th. (Pioneer) Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles*, p.67.

clear "Orange" activity in the 12th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles¹⁹⁶ and 11th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers¹⁹⁷ it would be logical to assume that they, too, had formed Orange Lodges. The role of Orange Lodges in maintaining morale is, given the lack of material available relating to them, almost impossible to assess. If lodges contained a significant number of men, then it may have increased unit cohesion and loyalty, and also maintained important links with events at home. Conversely, if lodges contained only a dozen or so men, as had been the case with military lodges in 1830,¹⁹⁸ then their influence would have been negligible. Finally, it should be noted that Orange Lodges could, actually have compromised discipline. If an N.C.O. was the master of a lodge and officers members (as was the case in the 16th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, where R.S.M. Gordon was the Worshipful Master and Major Gardiner, Captains Allen and Shepperd and Lieutenants Dickson and White, members¹⁹⁹), then this would create a difficult situation, with problems of partiality in applying the army's disciplinary code.

Reaching a balanced assessment of the state of discipline in the Irish New Army divisions, during their training period in the United Kingdom, is not a simple task. While the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions both had a relatively large number of mutinies, the court martial record of their units compared very favourably with that of the 10th. (Irish) Division. Nevertheless, a few factors are clear; firstly, the Irish New Army units during this period appear to have had a worse record than any other New Army units in Britain; certainly the Irish units appear to have had a decidedly disproportionate number of mutinies.

Secondly, the political influence exerted, at least on the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions, appears to have been mostly malign. This saddled both divisions with incompetent officers, many of them from the pre-war paramilitary organisations,

¹⁹⁶J. H. Stewart Moore, "Random Recollections", p.2.

¹⁹⁷The diary of Lieutenant Guy Owen Lawrence Young, pp.66-7, P.R.O.N.I., D/3045/6/11.

¹⁹⁸T. Gray, *The Orange Order*, p.131.

¹⁹⁹S. N. White, *The Terrors, 16th. (Pioneer) Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles*, p.67.

and threatened many of the regular army's tried and trusted methods of maintaining morale, most notably, the regimental system. Perhaps most damagingly, sectarian recruitment policies, fostered by the political nature of these divisions meant that both were painfully slow at recruiting to establishment, indeed, with the exception of the 39th. Division,²⁰⁰ the 49th. Brigade was the last New Army formation to be sent overseas, in February 1916. This delay in sending these Irish divisions overseas led to boredom and discontent, especially in battalions which had recruited up to their full strength by the end of 1914.

Thirdly, the localities in which the New Army units were billeted almost encouraged indiscipline. Men of the 10th. (Irish) Division, stationed in Dublin and of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, located in the vicinity of Belfast, were based in areas which were very close to their own homes, which, often, led to desertion and absence without leave.

Fourthly, we should note that units which adopted many of the tried and tested methods of maintaining morale, from the regular army, appear to have maintained much better disciplinary records. For example, the courts martial record of the 13th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, serving in the 108th. Brigade, where a large number of sporting activities were organised, compares favourably with that of the 10th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, where such activities did not take place to the same extent.

Finally, it should be stressed that, as in the regular army, each service battalion had its own unique courts martial record. The 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, for example, appears to have maintained an excellent record, not because it was a particularly good battalion, in terms of either discipline or combat effectiveness, but because its adjutant, Captain Bentley did not want to try men by court martial! Equally, with reference to the regular army, it appears that men in the service

²⁰⁰I. F. W. Beckett and K. Simpson, (eds.), *A Nation in Arms*, p.235.

battalions very quickly adopted the same patterns of military crime as their regular counterparts.

Chapter 5.

“A Citizen Army at War”: Irish units on the Western Front, October 1915 to September 1916.

The period from October 1915 to September 1916 saw the peak of Irish involvement on the Western Front, with the arrival of the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions in that theatre. This period also saw a number of disciplinary problems occurring in Irish units. Some regular units, which had reformed on a number of occasions, witnessed indiscipline from members of the unit who felt insulted at being left as a cadre, when their comrades went into action. The 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions, as examined in the previous chapter, suffered from a number of inherent defects in discipline which became increasingly obvious in France. A number of officers and N.C.O.s proved completely unsuitable for front line service and insufficient training contributed to poor trench discipline. Finally, the High Command feared that the Easter Rising of April 1916 would lead to serious breaches of discipline in some Irish units.

This chapter will begin with a consideration of disciplinary problems in Irish regular battalions serving on the Western Front during this period. Secondly, the experiences of the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions in adapting to active service will be considered, especially in terms of their courts martial records. Thirdly, the experiences of the 16th. (Irish) Division at Hulluch and Ginchy and the 36th. (Ulster) Division at Thiepval will be assessed with reference to discipline. Fourthly, the impact of the Easter Rising on Irish units serving on the Western Front will be assessed. Finally, consideration will be given to the development of measures, official and unofficial, designed at maintaining morale.

As illustrated in table 5.1, overleaf, the disciplinary record of the regular Irish units serving on the Western Front between October 1915 and September 1916 was very varied. Nevertheless, some general trends are noticeable, if this table is compared

Table 5.1. Men tried by Courts Martial while serving in Irish regular units, October 1915 to September 1916.¹

Units	O	N	D	J	F	M	M	J	J	A	S	O	T
4th. R.I.D.G.	4	0	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	11
6th. Dragoons	3	2	1	2	3	1	1	0	1	3	2	4	23
8th. Hussars	3	4	3	1	1	4	0	0	1	0	2	1	20
5th. Lancers	3	0	3	0	2	0	1	0	5	1	0	0	15
N.I.H.	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	10
S.I.H.	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	6
1/Irish Guards	5	4	8	9	6	8	5	5	11	4	2	1	68
2/Irish Guards	0	4	4	3	4	3	1	2	3	4	4	1	33
1/Royal Irish Regt.	0	9	0	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
2/Royal Irish Regt.	1	1	4	4	5	3	3	3	2	1	5	3	35
1/Royal Inns. Fus.	/	/	/	/	/	12	3	7	7	3	1	3	36
2/Royal Inns. Fus.	4	1	5	12	3	17	22	15	11	6	17	4	117
1/Royal Irish Rifles	6	4	8	6	8	6	6	8	5	3	5	0	65
2/Royal Irish Rifles	4	4	10	4	7	4	2	3	13	0	8	8	67
1/Royal Irish Fus.	0	4	3	10	5	3	6	3	1	6	8	5	54
2/Royal Irish Fus.	4	9	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
1/Connaught Rangers	2	4	1	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
1/Leinster Regiment	2	4	1	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
2/Leinster Regiment	4	4	13	2	7	9	4	3	6	4	5	3	64
1/Royal Munster Fus.	/	/	/	/	/	0	5	5	7	7	7	6	37
2/Royal Munster Fus.	1	1	3	5	1	4	4	6	3	5	0	4	37
1/Royal Dublin Fus.	/	/	/	/	/	7	10	2	3	6	6	13	47
2/Royal Dublin Fus.	5	3	9	9	14	13	6	17	5	3	7	4	95

¹In cases where units spent some months in this period in theatres other than the Western Front, months spent elsewhere are marked “/” and where such units served on the Western Front for less than four months, no total has been calculated.

with table 3.1. A number of units with large numbers of courts martial in August 1914 to September 1915 had improved considerably in the October 1915 to September 1916 period. For example, the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers with 150 cases in the former period, shrank to just 95 in the latter, while the number of courts martial held on men serving in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles fell from 119 cases to just 67. However, this picture is by no means uniform. The 2nd. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers had 94 men tried by courts martial between August 1914 and September 1915, but 117 from October 1915 to September 1916. Nevertheless, overall, the disciplinary record of the Irish regular units was improving over these periods. If we compare the fifteen Irish units which served continuously on the Western Front from 1914 to September 1916, the number of men tried by courts martial had fallen in ten units, remained the same in two and risen in three, when the figures for August 1914 to September 1915 and October 1915 to September 1916 are compared.

As noted in chapter three, it is very difficult to account for many of these variations. In terms of casualties the 1st. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers had a much higher number than the 2nd. Battalion of the same regiment, but a better disciplinary record, whereas the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers had a worse courts martial record than the 1st. Battalion of the regiment and a higher casualty rate.²

Nevertheless, a few trends are clear. Firstly, it is noticeable that units which moved to other formations had improved disciplinary records while serving in their new formation. This is perhaps most noticeable in the case of the 2nd. Battalion, Leinster Regiment. This unit had 145 men tried by courts martial in the August 1914 to September 1915 period, but this fell to 64 during October 1915 to September 1916. This dramatic reduction would appear to be a result of this battalion's movement to the 73rd. Brigade, 24th. Division in October 1915. Similar reductions occurred in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles which joined the 74th. Brigade, 25th. Division, also

²I am grateful to Mr. Nicholas Perry for providing me with details on casualty figures.

in October 1915 and the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, which was transferred to the 4th. Division in May 1916.

The impact which these moves had on discipline are somewhat surprising, given that they were breaking up formations which had served together since the start of the war. Certainly the transfer from the 6th. to the 24th. Division was regarded as “sad news” by officers in the 2nd. Battalion, Leinster Regiment.³

By contrast, men in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles seem to have been very enthusiastic about their transfer. As Father Henry Gill noted; “It is now certain that we are to be put into 25th. Division, one of K[itchener]’s. All are delighted at the prospect of getting away from Hooze and Salient,..., We shall be the only regular Brigade in the Division and will I suppose, be its back-bone.”⁴ Gill further noted that Major General Haldane, G.O.C., 3rd. Division, told the men that they were being sent to the 25th. Division as they were his most senior Brigade.⁵ This tactful speech made it clear that the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles were, in no way, being passed to another formation as a form of punishment.

John Lucy, commenting on how the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles acted as instructors, wrote;

We were a bad lot to bring into that peaceful scene. Incredibly [sic] we listened to stories of flat-capped enemy troops who showed themselves at dawn and wished the British ‘Good Morning’. Now we knew why the Regulars were broken up, and we automatically did what was expected. There was no choice anyway. The morning greeters were shockingly killed off,... The New Army battalions got used to the more warlike atmosphere we brought with us, and shortly took it very much for granted,... These

³F. C. Hitchcock, *“Stand To”, A Diary of the Trenches, 1915-1918*, Gliddon Books, London, 1988, p.106.

⁴H. V. Gill, “As seen by a Chaplain with the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles”, p.59, Jesuit Archives Dublin.

⁵ibid, pp.59-60.

battalions got over their awe of us when they discovered they could do some things as well or better than we could, and they were far keener in the main than we were, because they had a tradition to build up, whereas we had become used to ours, and did not exert ourselves in any outstanding way simply to maintain it.⁶

Lucy mentioned that this experience with service battalions gave men of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles a great respect for the Kitchener units.⁷ His account also suggests that the regulars of his battalion enjoyed their role of instructors. Therefore, they presumably did not want to see their battalion lose its prestige by having a worse courts martial record than its New Army comrades.

While the exchange of regular and New Army units, following the failures of the 21st. and 24th. Divisions at Loos,⁸ may have improved the disciplinary record of the 2nd. Battalions of the Royal Irish Rifles and Leinster Regiment, it has been judged, generally, as a failure. As C. Hughes comments; "The regulars were intended to 'stiffen' the new formations, and, while there might have been some success in Lucy's case, generally it had little effect in the long term."⁹

A number of other Irish units saw a change in their brigading, or duties, which it is worth examining with reference to discipline. The 1st. Battalions of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Royal Munster Fusiliers and Royal Dublin Fusiliers, all in the 29th. Division, arrived in France in March 1916, having served at Gallipoli. These battalions appear to have adapted well to service in France, indeed, in June 1916,

⁶J. F. Lucy, There's a Devil in the Drum, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1938, pp.339-41.

⁷ibid, p.343.

⁸C. Hughes, "The New Armies", in I. F. W. Beckett and K. Simpson (eds.), A Nation in Arms; A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War, Tom Donovan Publishing Ltd., London, 1990, p.113.

⁹ibid, p.113.

Major General H. B. Delisle, G. O. C., 29th. Division, stated that; “The discipline in the 1st. Batt.[alion] R.[oyal] Inn[i]s.[killing] F.[usiliers] is excellent.”¹⁰

Other battalions faced less popular assignments. Following heavy losses at Loos in September 1915, the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers became pioneers to 1st. Division. As one officer noted;

From the end of November until early February 1916 over 2 months of a bitter winter, we spent our lives in the most demoralising assignment it is possible to imagine. Every night at dusk we marched up the line from Mazingarbe under intermittent shellfire to the trenches,..., From then until an hour before dawn we worked solidly in the most appalling conditions, rebuilding trenches,..., Dawn would find us back in Mazingarbe, a revolting and unrecognisable collection of sewer navvies caked from head to foot, mud in our hair, our ears, our eyes, and gritting between our teeth. To crown it all, we had casualties nearly every night and we were not even recognised as fighting men. The most heartbreaking part of the whole affair was that we had to spend the day trying to clean ourselves up and dry our clothing knowing all the time that we must start all over again that evening,..., Throughout January drafts of young Irishmen arrived and put new blood into the regiment. When at last, in February, the news came through that the battalion was to rejoin the Third Brigade, morale went sky-high overnight. Pioneer work had slowly been eating out the souls of the old soldiers.¹¹

This period of pioneer work, therefore, appears to have sapped morale and, as table 5.1 demonstrates, led to a small, if significant rise in the numbers of courts

¹⁰Comment included in the transcript of the court martial of Private James Cassidy, P.R.O., WO71/484.

¹¹P. R. Reid, *Winged Diplomat*, London, 1962, pp.55-6, cited in M. Staunton, “The Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Great War, 1914-18”, unpublished M.A. thesis, University College, Dublin, 1986, pp.34-5.

martial in the battalion. It is, perhaps, no coincidence that it was during this period that Private J. Graham was executed for desertion and obtaining money with false pretences, although, unfortunately no officer commenting on this case, gave any indication of how the High Command viewed discipline in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers.¹²

Another issue with regard to discipline, which becomes clear when tables 3.1 and 5.1 are compared is that units with good courts martial records were often sent to other theatres. Thus the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, 1st. Battalion, Connaught Rangers and 1st. Battalion, Leinster Regiment, were all sent to Salonika. This would appear to suggest that units which maintained good disciplinary records while serving on the Western Front were transferred to less arduous theatres as a reward, although no direct evidence of such a policy has come to light.

The final point which should be made with direct reference to table 5.1 is the impact of officers being tried by courts martial. This was particularly evident in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, where the C.O., Major and Temporary Lieutenant Colonel T. T. Stubbs, was cashiered for drunkenness on the 25th. March 1916. Six weeks later, Lieutenant S. S. Byrne, of the same unit, was cashiered for cowardice and offences under section 40 of the Army Act.¹³ This failure of leadership, especially in Stubbs' case does not appear to have adversely affected discipline in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, which had one of the best disciplinary records of any Irish unit during this period. This would suggest that officers serving in regular units who were clearly failing in their duties were quickly removed, before their actions led to similar problems amongst the rank and file.

The 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers faced another disciplinary problem during the October 1915 to September 1916 period over the establishment of a cadre

¹²Transcript of the court martial of Private J. Graham, P.R.O., WO71/438.

¹³See the entries in the Irish Western Front database for further details of Stubbs and Byrne's cases.

system, which, paradoxically, demonstrated high morale in this unit. On the 14th. July 1916 the warrant officers of the battalion caused 'serious unrest';

They had a grievance, and demanded an interview with the Commanding Officer. On inquiry by the latter, he elicited the information that the warrant officers considered *they were being very unfairly treated in being kept out of the battle, and wanted to know what they had done to deserve such a fate.* Headed by Regimental Sergeant Major Ring (who had most properly been awarded the first D.C.M. earned by the Battalion), they requested, almost demanded, that they should be allowed to take their usual places in action. Finally Colonel Lyons permitted two of the company sergeant-majors to fight with their companies, the remainder being left behind. The toss of a coin decided which these should be, and one of the losers to this day asserts that his rival used a double-headed penny.¹⁴

The 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers had introduced the cadre system of keeping a reserve of N.C.O.s on which to rebuild the battalion after a major action, in August 1914.¹⁵ This preservation of experienced N.C.O.s, which was not introduced into the B. E. F. as a whole until July 1916,¹⁶ along with the constant refusal of Regimental Sergeant Major John Ring to accept promotion, may well

¹⁴S. Mc Cance, *History of the Royal Munster Fusiliers*, vol. II, From 1861 to 1922 (Disbandment), Gale and Polden Ltd., Aldershot, 1927, p.137.

¹⁵Information supplied by Mr. Tadhg Moloney, Secretary, Royal Munster Fusiliers Association.

¹⁶See letter from Brigadier General William Francies Jeffries to Historical Section, C.I.D., 29/3/30, Jeffries Papers, Liddle Hart Centre of Military Archives, King's College, London. Jeffries, who was serving as a Second Lieutenant in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers at the time, stated that this cadre system was introduced on the 1st. July 1916, when every battalion was ordered to leave behind; "the 2nd. in command of the Battalion, and of Company and a percentage of men from every Company so that should the Battalion suffer very severely - which was the case on July 1st. - it should be reformed with the same spirit and traditions as before."

explain how this battalion maintained such a good courts martial record in the face of demoralising pioneer work and the court martial of its C.O..

Discipline in the regular Irish units was under pressure from two other measures during this period, namely the partial collapse of the army's drafting system and the transfer of experienced officers, N.C.O.s and, even, other ranks, in Irish cavalry regiments to other units. Traditionally, regular units of the British army had relied on their depots and post-1908 Special Reserve Battalions to send them drafts in the event of war.¹⁷ However, given the high losses experienced by regular Irish units and the downturn in Irish recruitment, evident long before the Easter Rising,¹⁸ this system was beginning to break down. This, of course, was not endemic to Irish units, as early as February 1916 it was decided to draft men of the 1/9th. Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and 1/4th. Battalion, Cameron Highlanders to their 1st. and 2nd. Battalions and to amalgamate the 1/4th. and 1/5th. Battalions, Black Watch.¹⁹ The collapse of the drafting system is demonstrated by the number of drafts, from various Irish Special Reserve units, sent to the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, during a two week period in July 1916. This battalion received 54 men from the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 52 from the Royal Munster Fusiliers, 63 of the Royal Irish Regiment, 18 from the Leinster Regiment, 9 of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, 4 from the Royal Irish Rifles, 4 of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and 2 from the Connaught Rangers.²⁰

What frustrated officers in Irish regular units was the apparent insensitivity with which the War Office appeared to deal with their recruiting problems. As Hitchcock noted in July 1916;

¹⁷E. M. Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Refomer*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1980, p.89.

¹⁸P. Callan, "Voluntary Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland during the First World War", unpublished Ph.D., University College Dublin, 1984, pp.85-6.

¹⁹Entry for 14/2/16, Adjutant General's war diary, P.R.O., WO95/26.

²⁰Entry for 21/7/16, war diary of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, P.R.O., WO95/2301 and H. C. Wylly, *Neill's 'Blue Caps'*, vol. III, 1914-22, Gale and Polden Ltd., Aldershot, 1925, pp.71-2.

Owing to the heavy demands for reinforcements from the Somme area, there seemed to be no discrimination with regard to men being sent to their own units. Two hundred men of the Connaught Rangers were sent up the line to join the Munsters, who had suffered severely in the attack on Mametz Wood. A Leinster draft of over fifty was sent to the Black Watch! Posting men of one Irish regiment to another was reasonable, but sending Leinsters to join any regiment but an Irish one gave cause for much legitimate grousing.²¹

An officer of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers felt even more strongly about the reinforcements denied to his battalion, noting that the spirit and traditions of the regiment were undermined by; "That pernicious habit of drafting officers and men to different Regiments to fill up casualties often quite unnecessarily, i.e. 50 Dublin Irishmen put into kilts in the Seaforths in the same brigade whilst in same draft 50 English recruits were sent to the Dublins."²²

This indiscriminate drafting policy therefore appears to have been deeply resented by officers in the units concerned and, presumably, was also unpopular amongst members of new drafts, who had enlisted into a specific regiment and expected to serve in one of its battalions overseas. However, having acknowledged this, there is no indication that this policy led to any serious disciplinary problems in Irish regular units. Indeed, it may have led to greater discipline amongst members of a new draft, in the hope that this would lead to their acceptance by the battalion concerned.

The stalemate of trench warfare meant that, increasingly, cavalry units on the Western Front became redundant. This situation meant that they were seen as an excellent source of trained officers, N.C.O.s and other ranks for infantry units and,

²¹C. C. Hitchcock, "Stand To!" *A Diary of the Trenches*, p.130.

²²Letter, Brigadier General W. F. Jeffries to Historical Section, C.I.D., 29/3/30, Jeffries Papers, Liddle Hart Centre of Military Archives, King's College, London.

indeed, that many ambitious officers, seeking faster promotion, applied for transfer to front line infantry units. On the 28th. November 1915, alone, the 6th. Inniskilling Dragoons lost three of their Squadron Sergeant Majors, who were promoted and transferred to other units, namely, T. H. Yolden sent to the 9th. Battalion, East Surrey Regiment, L. Tynan to the 6th. Battalion, Wiltshire Regiment and T. Ashard to the 8th. Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders. None of these men had less than sixteen and a half years service.²³ In May 1916 it would appear that a draft of one lieutenant and 75 other ranks of the 8th. Hussars was sent to the 36th. (Ulster) Division.²⁴ While, in August 1915 the 1st. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers received a number of men compulsorily transferred from Lancer regiments.²⁵

With regard to officers, the 5th. Lancers alone lost two experienced officers in this period. In September 1916 Lieutenant Sharpe transferred to the 2nd. Battalion, Leinster Regiment,²⁶ while, in July 1916 Captain A. G. Mc Clintock was promoted and became the C.O. of the 9th. Battalion, Yorkshire Light Infantry.²⁷ By October 1916 there were serious concerns that this process had gone too far and the G.O.C., Cavalry Corps stated that, in future, no officers or N.C.O.s were allowed to transfer from cavalry to infantry or Royal Flying Corps units.²⁸

Finally, with respect to regular units, the point must be made that, purely from a practical point of view, the numbers of men tried by courts martial in regular units would naturally fall, as the war progressed. In August 1914 units of the original B.E.F. embarked for active service with, in their ranks, a relatively large number of men who had already committed military crimes and when they committed another,

²³Entry for 28/11/15, war diary of the 6th. Inniskilling Dragoons, P.R.O., WO95/1176.

²⁴Entry for 27/5/16, war diary of the 8th. Hussars, P.R.O., WO95/1185.

²⁵M. G. Staunton, "Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-19 as Historical Source Material", *Stand To*, 27, 1989, p.7.

²⁶F. C. Hitchcock, "Stand To", *A Diary of the Trenches*, p.176.

²⁷J. R. Harvey, *The History of the 5th. (Royal Irish) Regiment of Dragoons, from 1689 to 1799, Afterwards, The 5th. Royal Irish Lancers, from 1858 to 1921*, Gale and Polden Ltd., Aldershot, 1923, p. 327.

²⁸ibid, p.337.

these men would automatically be tried by court martial. By contrast, in October 1915, many of these men were dead, their places taken by wartime recruits, who would be tried by their C.O. for their first and, perhaps, even second or third military crime, as long as this was of a minor nature, before being referred to trial by court martial. This partially explains why, in the face of high losses, especially of officers and N.C.O.s, the disciplinary record of regular Irish units, based on courts martial records, generally improved in the October 1915 to September 1916 period.

The disciplinary problems faced by Irish New Army units serving on the Western Front were, in the main, very different from those faced by the regular units, during this period. Indeed, between October 1915 and September 1916 the major disciplinary issues faced by service battalions were, how would they adapt to active service and behave in major actions?

The transition of the New Army divisions from training in the United Kingdom to active service was, by no means, an easy one and this is particularly apparent in the case of the 36th. (Ulster) Division. This Division experienced a number of changes when arriving in France, most importantly the replacement of Major General Powell with Major General Sir Oliver Nugent. Unlike his predecessor, Nugent had experience of commanding troops in the Great War itself, having commanded 42nd. Brigade, 14th. (Light) Division, itself a New Army formation.²⁹ Also, unlike Powell, Nugent, despite his involvement in the U.V.F. pre-war, was to resist Ulster Unionist interference in the 36th. (Ulster) Division. Thus, in his first address to the division, following a field day, far from praising his new formation, he made it clear that he felt that it was poorly trained and unfit for front line service. Most officers who heard this speech appear to have remembered it all too well. Second Lieutenant Guy O. L. Young of the 11th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers recalled;

²⁹There is, as yet, no biography of Sir Oliver Nugent. However, there is a brief biographical sketch in, Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, Annual Report 1992-93 of the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, P.R.O.N.I., Belfast, 1994, pp.53-6.

At the pow wow after the 'ceasefire' he [Nugent] told us quietly + firmly what he thought of us as a Division. His remarks in brief may be summed up as follows we had a good name as a division but he did not know how we got it. Every rudimentary mistake that could be made had been made by officers that day. They showed total ignorance of modern conditions + lamentable ignorance. He did not know what sort of training we had had in Ireland, but it was very poor. Such were the remarks General Nugent made to his new officers at his first 'pow wow'. They left an impression on the minds of many who heard them that will never die out, but they had their effect on all ranks.³⁰

Colonel (then Major) F. J. M. McCrory of the 10th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, recounted the same lecture;

This Field Day was the first occasion on which the new Divisional Commander had seen the Division as a whole, and few of the officers who were privileged to listen to his 'pow wow' after the performance will forget it. Very gravely, he opened his remarks by saying how glad he was to have seen at last, the famous Ulster Division going through an Attack Practice, but (still more gravely) how much more glad he was it was only a Practice Attack, for had it been a 'pukka' attack on the German lines he very much feared that he would not have had the pleasure of speaking to any of the participating officers again in this world. The general went on to compliment the officers on their excellent North of Ireland eyesight - he observed that although we were all equipped with Field Glasses, none of them [sic] had

³⁰The diary of Second Lieutenant Guy Owen Lawrence Young, 11th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, P.R.O.N.I., D.3045/6/11, pp.18-19.

ever found it necessary to use them, even during the initial stages of the attack. As a lecture it was superb, and did a lot of good, even though the officers did feel a little bit small, and more than a little aggrieved, at the nature of their commander's witticisms.³¹

However, Nugent's lecture was not simply a critical diatribe, it included some considered and informed comments on modern military discipline;

Discipline is the cement which binds every body of men into a homogeneous whole and without which any body of soldiers has little to distinguish it from an ordinary mob.

Training, good behaviour, intelligence, education and physical fitness are all essential qualities in an army but without discipline what use are they in the field.

It is the spirit of discipline which enables you and the men you have to lead to face losses, to go steadily to your front and to comfort difficulties and dangers which would probably [have] frightened you into a lunatic asylum 8 months ago,.... All men are not equally brave or equally [steady?] under discipline, some have less control than others over their emotions. Those are the men who in a big fight begin to look behind them, who become seized with panic and try to get away to the rear.

The bad example of one man is contagious and may affect a number in his vicinity.

Every officer and N.C.O. has a great responsibility at such times. A rot must always be stopped before it spreads. You would be justified in using

³¹Unpublished account by F. J. M. Mc Crory, "The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, The 10th. Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (The Derrys)", p.4, The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers Museum, Box 70.

every means even to the most decisive to prevent an individual whose nerve has gone from being a cause of infection to others.

You would be not only justified in any step you took to deal with such cases but I shall expect it of you,... Successful leading is largely a matter of the confidence of the men in the officers and N.C.O.s they know and trust, but men will not trust where they do not respect. They do respect the man who is strict and just. The easy going officer or N.C.O. who lets things pass which it is his duty to notice, may be popular in quarters, but he does not earn respect, and the men do not give him the obedience which a leader in battle must exact and get or pay the penalty in failure.

It is to the regimental officers and N.C.O.s that all higher commanders look for maintenance of discipline. If you fail in that, you fail in all besides.

Don't forget that much depends on the way in which you give orders. That is where the blessed quality called tact comes in. Tact is like charity. It covers a multitude of sins. Don't bully men. You will sometimes have to extract a days work out of men who are already dead beat and whose nerves are raw.

Avoid criticising your superiors.³²

Nugent therefore made it clear to his officers, even by example, that he felt that the officers and N.C.O.s in his division should not court popularity. Instead, he believed in firm discipline, to be maintained, if necessary, by shooting retreating men. His final comment, regarding criticism of superiors, demonstrates his understanding of the new "citizen soldiers" and propounds his view, more firmly expressed in February 1918, that problems in the Division should not take on a political dimension or appear in the press.

³²Lecture by Major General Sir Oliver Nugent to the 36th. (Ulster) Division, October 1915, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., MIC/571/11.

Nugent's criticisms of the 36th. (Ulster) Division were sincerely felt. Writing to his wife on the 16th. October 1915, he stated; "I had a field day today,...., which was quite interesting and after which I delivered a long criticism. There were too many mistakes and shortcomings I am sorry to say in a Division supposed to be ready for war."³³

The new G.O.C. of the 36th. (Ulster) Division acted quickly to remedy problems in the division. On the 10th. October, Nugent decided to replace Brigadier General Couchman as G.O.C., 107th. Brigade, noting; "I have had to write to one of my Brigadiers and tell him he won't do, so beastly, but quite unavoidable. I might have delayed it, but what good and a good man is badly wanted at once."³⁴ On the 12th. October he decided to remove one of his staff officers as; "Meynell is I am afraid a useless Staff Officer, always making heavy weather of everything and no more intelligent than a clerk. I have to think of every thing in his branch and he gets on my nerves. I am afraid I shall have to get him removed."³⁵

Nugent also moved quickly to replace battalion C.O.s who he judged to be incompetent. On the 1st. November 1915 Lieutenant Colonel G. Bull replaced Lieutenant Colonel R. C. A. McCalmont as C. O. of the 12th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles.³⁶ Likewise, on the 2nd. December 1915 Lieutenant Colonel F. L. Gordon

³³Letter, Nugent to his wife, 16/10/15, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.3835/E/2/5/12A.

³⁴Letter, Nugent to his wife, 10/10/15, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.3835/E/2/5/8.

³⁵Letter, Nugent to his wife, 12/10/15, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.3835/E/2/5/10. The only Meynell, or indeed officer with a similar surname, with a staff position in the November 1915 Army List was Major (Temporary Lieutenant Colonel) G. Meynell of the Shropshire Light Infantry. He had been serving as an Assistant Adjutant and Quarter Master General since the 31st. August 1915. (War Office, Monthly Army List for November 1915, H.M.S.O., London, 1915, column 38b.) On the 4th. November 1915 Meynell returned to regimental duty as C.O. of the 6th. Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (War Office, Army List for July 1916, H.M.S.O., London, 1916, column 1362 a.). This would seem to suggest that this was the officer Nugent was referring to.

³⁶ War Office, Army List for July 1916, H. M. S. O., London, 1916, column 1496c. McCalmont became a Lieutenant Colonel in the Irish Guards on the 14th. February 1916 (War Office, Army List for July 1916, column 887.). However, in a letter of the

replaced Lieutenant Colonel G. H. Ford-Hutchinson as C.O. of the 15th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles.³⁷ As Ford-Hutchinson did not hold any further command in the British army, this would appear to be a clear case of dismissal for incompetence.³⁸

However, Nugent found that one of his brigades needed more drastic changes. While he had observed the 108th. and 109th. Brigades during the field day on the 16th. October 1915, the 107th. (often known as the “Belfast”) Brigade was serving in the trenches, on attachment to 4th. Division. Reports on its performance were unfavourable and, as table 5.2, overleaf, demonstrates, it had the worst disciplinary record in the 36th. (Ulster) Division. Writing to his wife, following the 107th. Brigade’s return from the trenches, Nugent wrote;

I am not too happy about the Ulster Division for it cannot be denied that some of them have very little discipline. The Belfast [107th.] Brigade is awful. They have absolutely no discipline and their officers are awful. I am very much disturbed about them.

I don’t think they are fit for service and I should be very sorry to have to trust these. Don’t breathe one word of this to a living soul please. It is all due to putting a weak man [i.e. Brigadier General Couchman] in command of the Brigade to start with and giving commissions to men of the wrong class.³⁹

12th. October 1915, Nugent stated; “I have to recommend the removal of another C.O. today.” (Letter, Nugent to his wife, 12/10/15, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.3835/E/2/5/10). McCalmont’s replacement less than three weeks later strongly suggests that this was the officer Nugent was referring to.

³⁷War Office, *Army List for July 1916*, column 1496f..

³⁸The *Army Lists* for January, July and December 1916, make no mention of Ford-Hutchinson being on the active or reserve lists, which suggests that he had been compulsorily retired.

³⁹Letter, Nugent to his wife, 26/10/15, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.3835/E/2/5/20A.

Table 5.2. The number of men tried by courts martial, while serving in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, October 1915 to September 1916.

Units.	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	T
107th. Brigade.													
8/R. I. Rifs.	2	6	3	3	0	1	0	1	2	0	2	1	21
9/R. I. Rifs.	6	3	3	4	3	1	5	2	1	0	2	1	31
10/R. I. Rifs.	3	1	8	4	4	1	4	6	1	2	2	2	38
15/R. I. Rifs.	2	3	5	3	6	2	1	0	3	0	6	1	32
108th. Brigade.													
11/R. I. Rifs.	1	6	1	0	0	2	2	1	1	0	0	3	17
12/R. I. Rifs.	2	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	1	1	1	0	9
13/R. I. Rifs.	1	3	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	8
9/R. Ir. Fus.	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	0	7
109th. Brigade.													
9/R. Inns. Fus.	2	0	5	3	1	4	2	1	0	1	0	4	23
10/R. Inns. Fus.	0	4	3	1	1	1	6	4	1	1	2	2	26
11/R. Inns. Fus.	0	3	4	5	4	0	4	2	1	1	2	1	27
14/R. I. Rifs.	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	4	8
Div. Pioneers.													
16/R. I. Rifs.	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	7

Nugent had no hesitation in telling officers of the 107th. Brigade exactly what he thought of their units. In November 1915 Nugent “strafed” Major F. P. Crozier of the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, castigating him for bringing “such a mob” to France.⁴⁰

The High Command offered a solution to Nugent’s disciplinary problems, by breaking up the 36th. (Ulster) Division. Initially, Nugent was not enthusiastic about this, on the 23rd. October 1915 he wrote;

⁴⁰D. Starret, unpublished manuscript entitled “Batman”, p.39, I.W.M., 79/35/1. While only a private, as Crozier’s servant, Starret was uniquely qualified to comment on such conversations.

The Ulster Division is being broken up I am sorry to say. That is to say we are to lose 1 Brigade of Ulster men and get another Brigade in its place of regulars. This is to happen to all the New Divisions I understand. I am very sorry and I am afraid it will cause a great feeling of disappointment and will I fear have a bad effect on recruiting in Ulster. I hope it may only be for a while and that later on the 3 Ulster Brigades will be all under one roof again. It is in many ways a good idea no doubt as the new battalions will have a better opportunity of picking up useful knowledge when they have regular battalions along side of them.⁴¹

Nugent, faced by this situation, did what any sensible G.O.C. would do and jettisoned his problem formation, the 107th. Brigade, on to 4th. Division, receiving the 12th. Brigade in return. Initially, it would appear that this transfer was to be permanent.⁴²

Nugent made it quite clear to officers of the 107th. Brigade that they were to regard this transfer as a punishment. As F. P. Crozier recollected, a number of senior N.C.O.s in the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles became 'dead drunk'⁴³ and;

It so happened that other unfortunate 'accidents', such as minor looting, take place in other battalions of the brigade at about the same time, with the result that Major-General Oliver Nugent, the newly appointed Divisional Commander, begins to think one of his brigades is an undisciplined mob! As a matter of fact two of the battalions were always much better than the other two, although the men in all the battalions were magnificent. There

⁴¹Letter, Nugent to his wife, 23/10/15, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.3835/E/2/5/17.

⁴²C. Falls, *The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division*, Constable, London, 1996, p.24.

⁴³In October and November 1915, alone, the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles had one company sergeant major, four sergeants, two corporals and one lance corporal and one rifleman found guilty of drunkenness. See entries in appendix 6, and the Irish Western Front database.

had been an absence of intellectual and uniform training at the outset, which was often the case in the new armies. General Nugent, taking the bull by the horns, assembles all the officers of our brigade in a village schoolroom where he delivers a strafe, not wholly deserved but very good for us, which I shall always treasure in my mind as the complete example of what can be said by the powerful to the powerless in the shortest space of time possible, consistent with the regulations of words and space for breathing, in the most offensive, sarcastic and uncompromising manner possible,..., At last the sentence is pronounced! 'Banishment - to the 4th. Division!'⁴⁴

The incorporation of the 12th. Brigade into the 36th. (Ulster) Division meant that the 11th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, from the 109th. Brigade, were attached to 12th. Brigade, while the 2nd. Battalion, Essex Regiment was attached to 109th. Brigade and the 2nd. Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers to 108th. Brigade.⁴⁵ The impact of these changes on discipline in the 108th. and 109th. Brigades, as considered in table 5.2, are debatable. For example, in the case of the 11th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, the number of men tried by courts martial, fell sharply during this period of attachment (from November 1915 to January 1916). However, in the case of the 11th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, the number of courts martial held increased.

Certainly this period of attachment did little to tackle more fundamental problems in the 108th. and 109th. Brigades. In October 1915, Lieutenant A. C. Herdman, noted of Brigadier General C. Hackett Pain, G.O.C., 108th. Brigade;

Here we are with our Brigadier who must know he would be absolutely useless when it comes to anything especially trenches, as you know he could

⁴⁴F. P. Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, Cedric Chivers Ltd., Bath, 1968, pp.61-2.

⁴⁵The diary of Second Lieutenant G. O. L. Young, pp.46-7, P.R.O.N.I., D.3045/6/11.

not walk 2 y[ar]ds along ours + here he is kidding himself + everyone else that he is fit + some day we shall have another + until then we run along wasting time + the nations money.⁴⁶

Herdman further felt that, by retaining his battalion in reserve, the military authorities were actually promoting indiscipline, noting;

Everyone complaining of inaction, its affecting the Batt[alio]n in different ways, the chief way is for the S[er]g[ean]t[s] to get drunk + really I feel a certain amount of sympathy for some of them. A poor billet, leaky + drafty on a bad ey [sic] + poor light naturally they go to the cafes + the blasted proprietors, in spite of regulations, sell them 'Rum' which knocks them out.⁴⁷

In the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, other problems were not remedied by the attachment to 12th. Brigade. When in the trenches between the 8th. and the 13th. November 1915, Rifleman J. Mac Roberts noted;

Once again we were under the control of our officers who were nearly all ignorant, conservative and bullying, to an intolerable degree.

Captain S-----⁴⁸ was intoxicated for most of the time we were in the trenches. I believe he once visited our guard at night. He asked the sentry his name and then what were his duties. The sentry replied. 'Is that right?'

⁴⁶Letter, Lieutenant A. C. Herdman to his mother, 31/10/15, P.R.O.N.I., T.2510/1. Hackett Pain remained the G.O.C. of the 108th. Brigade until the 4th. December 1916. C. Falls, The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, p.308.

⁴⁷Letter, Lieutenant A. C. Herdman to his mother, 11/11/15, P.R.O.N.I., T.2510/1.

⁴⁸The only captain in the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles at this time whose surname began with S. was Captain C. O. Slacke, a temporary officer, War Office, Army List for January 1915, column 1496d.

asked S----- of the sergeant of the guards, who was a Warwick, 'Yes, sir', replied the sergeant.

'And what would you do in case of an alarm?' was the next question of the reeky Captain. The sentry gave an answer. 'Is that correct?' queried the Captain of the sergeant a second time. 'Not exactly, Sir' was the answer. 'You are absolutely wrong', said the Captain turning upon the unfortunate private, 'you are a sentry and you do not know your duty, you should be court-martialled'. Such arrogance from an ignorant, drunken officer was unbearable to flesh and blood.

Our Lieutenant was scarcely more visible during our stay in the trenches. He never came round to see how we fared for food, he never visited our dug-out and our rifles actually were never inspected once. But when in quarters, where we had every opportunity of taking care of our equipment, our lives were verily plagued with rifle, kit and billet inspections.⁴⁹

Also during this period of attachment, Captain Hyndman tried to have 40 men of the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, court martialled for losing their iron rations in the trenches. Following this the men felt that; "Captain Hyndman was unstable."⁵⁰

This period of attachment did see one major benefit for the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles. It occurred when the Brigadier General of the 107th. Brigade discovered that the battalion had under-drawn bread to the value of £600.⁵¹ This discovery meant that the men's diet was improved greatly, when full rations were again provided.

⁴⁹Diary of Rifleman J. MacRoberts, p.92, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds.

⁵⁰Anon., "Service with the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles (Y.C.V.), 1914-18 War", p.110, unpublished manuscript, Royal Ulster Rifles Museum.

⁵¹Diary of Rifleman J. MacRoberts, pp.94-5, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds. It is unclear why Brigadier General Whittycombe inspected the finances of this unit, as it never came, formally, under his command.

A number of the problems in the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, appear to have been the result of illness amongst veteran officers and N.C.O.s. The C.O., Lieutenant Colonel R. P. D. S. Chichester, suffered from persistent lung trouble and was away from the battalion during much of the October 1915 to September 1916 period.⁵² Major H. R. Bliss of the Royal Irish Regiment became acting C.O. for a three month period⁵³ while Major Llewellyn, who again was posted from another unit, also took over temporary command.⁵⁴ Major P. Kerr-Smiley, one of the few officers with previous regular military experience, serving in the unit, was invalided to England with a stomach infection.⁵⁵ During the same period, Regimental Sergeant Major Elphick and Sergeant Irvine were sent to England with lumbago⁵⁶ while the health of Company Sergeant Major Griffith also broke down in the trenches.⁵⁷

Attachment to the 4th. Division, equally, appears to have done little to improve discipline in the 107th. Brigade. Indeed, following this period of attachment, the brigade had its first executions, in February 1916 when the death penalty was imposed on Rifleman J. Crozier of the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles and Riflemen J. F. McCracken and J. Templeton of the 15th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles. The fall in the number of courts martial in these battalions, and indeed the entire 107th. Brigade, after February 1916 (see table 5.2) suggests that it was these executions, rather than attachment to the 4th. Division which reduced the cases of indiscipline in this formation.

In the case of Rifleman James Crozier, while Brigadier General Whittycombe noted that; "The discipline of the 9th. R.[oyal] I.[rish] Rif[le]s. is good for a service Battalion." Major General Nugent felt that the execution should proceed as; "There

⁵²*The Incinerator* (troop journal of the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles), May 1916, p.15. This journal was consulted at the Somme Heritage Centre, Newtownards.

⁵³ibid, p.9.

⁵⁴*The Incinerator*, June 1916, p.20.

⁵⁵ibid, p.20.

⁵⁶ibid, p.22.

⁵⁷ibid, p.26.

have been previous cases of desertion in the 107th. Brigade.”⁵⁸ With reference to the cases of Riflemen McCracken and Templeton, both Brigadier General Whittycombe and Major General Nugent felt that the death penalty should be enforced to prevent further desertions from the 15th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, Whittycombe noting that; “The discipline of the 15th. Batt.[alion] R.[oyal] I.[rish] Rif[le]s is fair for a Service Battalion.”⁵⁹

The effect of the transfer of 107th. Brigade to the 4th. Division on morale is difficult to assess. Falls comments; “Any advantages they may have had were found insufficient to counterbalance the dislike of the break-up of their old formations felt by battalions of both Divisions.”⁶⁰ However, Crozier stated that men of the 107th. Brigade wanted to stay with the 4th. Division and petitioned the High Command, asking not to be returned to the 36th. (Ulster) Division.⁶¹

F. P. Crozier noted that, during the period with 4th. Division, the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles suffered from a number of problems, mainly as a result of the poor quality of officers in the unit. While in the trenches Captain Gaffikin turned to alcoholism and, one evening, attempted to lead two platoons into No Mans Land in a suicidal attempt to recover two men, captured by a German patrol. Crozier prevented this attack, but refused to report Gaffikin. Instead, he simply requested that Gaffikin gave up alcohol while serving with the battalion.⁶² Crozier also covered up for a young second lieutenant who contracted venereal disease, allowing him ten days leave to have this privately treated in Amiens.⁶³

⁵⁸Comments included in transcript of the court martial of Rifleman James Crozier, P.R.O., WO71/450.

⁵⁹Comment included in the transcript of the courts martial of Riflemen J. F. McCracken and J. Templeton, P.R.O., WO71/453 and WO71/454.

⁶⁰C. Falls, History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, p.25.

⁶¹F. P. Crozier, A Brass Hat in No Man's Land, p.62.

⁶²ibid, pp.68-70.

⁶³ibid, pp.64-5.

Crozier's decision, in Gaffikin's case was to prove a sensible one. Gaffikin, by then a major, died bravely, on the 1st. July 1916, leading his men into action.⁶⁴ However, in the case of the second lieutenant, who Crozier refers to as Rochdale, but who was actually Second Lieutenant A. J. Annandale, Crozier's oversight was to have serious consequences. On the 1st. February 1916, Annandale was tried by a General Court Martial for offences under section 40 of the Army Act, for, "Conduct to the prejudice of good order and Military Discipline, in that he, in the fire trenches, when his Commanding Officer was discussing certain Military work with him, left the dug-out in which the discussion was taking place without permission and did not return."⁶⁵ While the sentence of the court martial was that he be dismissed from the army, there was a recommendation to mercy on health grounds⁶⁶ and it was not confirmed by the military authorities.⁶⁷ Annandale had, by all accounts, ran from the front line trenches, in full view of his men, while under fire from trench mortars.⁶⁸ Crozier stated that he refused to accept Annandale back into his battalion,⁶⁹ however, it is unclear if this was, indeed, the case. Annandale was placed on sick leave from the 2nd. March until the 29th. August 1916, when he was forced to relinquish his commission. A medical board concluded that, not only had he developed serious eye problems, but that he was suffering from shell-shock.⁷⁰

Annandale's apparent free pardon, days after Rifleman Crozier had been sentenced to death for a similar offence was an unpopular decision in his battalion. As Starret noted; "If the officer did not know what he was doing, did the man? We did

⁶⁴C. Falls, History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, p.59.

⁶⁵Report on Annandale's General Court Martial, included in the personnel file of Second Lieutenant Arthur J. Annandale, P.R.O., WO339/14160.

⁶⁶ibid.

⁶⁷See entry for Annandale in the Irish Western Front database for further details.

⁶⁸F. P. Crozier, A Brass Hat in No Man's Land, pp.80-1 and D. Starret, "Batman", p.56, I.W.M., 79/35/1.

⁶⁹F. P. Crozier, A Brass Hat in No Man's Land, p.81.

⁷⁰Report of Medical Board, meeting on 17/8/16, included in the personnel file of Second Lieutenant A. J. Annandale, P.R.O., WO339/14160.

not think so, and Bell actually chanced his three stripes, and was placed under arrest himself by taking the handcuffs off the chap.”⁷¹

The 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles apparently faced another, similar, officer problem, when on the 1st. July 1916 a second lieutenant deserted and was later found in a billet. This officer was not tried by court martial as most of the witnesses to his desertion were killed in action. The officer was forced to resign his commission, but escaped conscription as he was then resident in Ireland.⁷²

Two other officers in the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles proved themselves unfit to command front line infantry. Lieutenant Colonel Ormerod was evacuated with pneumonia; not surprisingly the health of this veteran, nearing seventy years of age, broke down in the trenches.⁷³ In less meritorious circumstances, an elderly subaltern who Crozier refers to as Felucan became an alcoholic after his “nerves went” and Crozier sent him home.⁷⁴

In an army which has long believed that; “there is no such thing as a bad soldier, only bad officers”⁷⁵ the court martial of one officer, forced resignation of another, transfer of one due to alcoholism and clear evidence of alcoholism in another, is a damning indictment of any unit. The ill-health of the C.O. which forced him to leave the unit, did little to help matters.

However, not all disciplinary problems in the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles were on the part of officers. Captain W. A. Montgomery noted that drunkenness was a serious problem in the battalion; “Over the drink troubles I have taken the drastic

⁷¹D. Starret, “Batman”, p.57, I.W.M., 79/35/1.

⁷²F. P. Crozier, *The Men I Killed*, Michael Joseph Ltd., London, 1939, p.163.

⁷³F. P. Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Man’s Land*, p.74. On the 1st. September 1916 Ormerod was appointed C.O. of the 82nd. Training Reserve Battalion. (War Office, *Army List for December 1916*, column 1582k). This suggests that, while regarded as unfit for active service, Ormerod was still seen as a perfectly competent officer.

⁷⁴F. P. Crozier, *A Brass Hat in No Man’s Land*, p.79. There was no officer named Felucan serving in the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, it is likely that Crozier was referring to Second Lieutenant E. W. P. Feneran, War Office, *Army List for January 1916*, column 1495b.

⁷⁵I am grateful to Major Ivan Nelson, Royal Irish Regiment (retired) for this reference.

step of not paying the company,..., I understand they were stunned with horror. They are now blacklisting all the doubtful boys with a view to taking care of them when within a mile of drink.”⁷⁶ Perhaps the most shocking aspect of this indiscipline in the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles is that it was one of the better disciplined units in the 107th. Brigade, as table 5.2 demonstrates.

Evaluating how well the 16th. (Irish) Division adapted to service on the Western Front is much more difficult than in the case of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, largely due to the absence of primary source material.⁷⁷ As in the case of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, active service saw a new G.O.C. for the 16th. (Irish) Division, in the form of Major General W. B. Hickie. The replacement of Lieutenant General Sir Lawrence Parsons was not a particularly popular move in the division. For example, Captain William Redmond, writing to Parsons, stated; “I regret the fact that you are leaving us. This regret is universal in the Division which you have seen grow under your care.”⁷⁸ This is in sharp contrast to the 36th. (Ulster) Division, where no-one appears to have felt any remorse at the removal of Major General Powell.

However, Hickie, as that rare breed, a senior, Irish, Catholic officer, was a popular replacement. As Father J. Wrafter, chaplain to the 8th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers noted; “The General of the Division - Parsons - was changed yesterday. It was a great disappointment to everyone. He was very much liked + had raised the Division,..., The new General is William Hickie, so we can’t complain.”⁷⁹

Hickie was a much more diplomatic and tactful man than Nugent, indeed his political awareness is shown by the fact that he became one of the first senators in the Irish Free State,⁸⁰ and when taking over the 16th. (Irish) Division, unlike Nugent, he

⁷⁶Letter from Captain W. A. Montgomery to his parents, 13/12/15, P.R.O.N.I., D.2794/1/1/4.

⁷⁷In particular, the papers of Major General W. B. Hickie, for this period, do not survive.

⁷⁸Letter, Redmond to Parsons, 28/11/15, Parsons’ papers, N.L.I., Ms. 21,278.

⁷⁹Letter, Father Wrafter to his Father Provincial, 26/11/15, Jesuit Archives Dublin.

⁸⁰T. Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki*, pp.427-8.

spoke of the pride which his new command gave him.⁸¹ Hickie was particularly tactful in that what he initially commanded was not actually an entire division: while the 47th. and 48th. Brigades arrived in France on the 18th. December 1915, the 49th. Brigade did not reach the Western Front until February 1916.⁸² As a result, it would probably be true to say that no-one expected a great performance from the 16th. (Irish) Division, an incomplete formation, which had only been sent to France under pressure from the I.P.P..⁸³

Certainly there were serious problems in the 16th. (Irish) Division, as table 5.3, overleaf, demonstrates. The courts martial records of some units of the 16th. (Irish) Division, for example the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, compared very badly to battalions of the 36th. (Ulster) Division. However, unlike in the case of the 107th. Brigade, 36th. (Ulster) Division, no one brigade could be singled out as having a worse disciplinary record than the others.

Furthermore, the whole ethos in training the 16th. (Irish) Division was very different to that in the 36th. (Ulster) Division. While units of the 36th. (Ulster) Division had been sent into the front line, soon after their arrival in France and then the 107th. Brigade had been exchanged with the 12th. Brigade, the system of training in the 16th. (Irish) Division was to be very different. Whether this was a policy devised by Hickie or the Higher Command is unclear, but certainly Hickie was a firm advocate of this alternative system. As Staniforth noted;

⁸¹T. P. Dooley, Irishmen or English Soldiers? The Times and World of a Southern Catholic Irish Man (1876-1916) Enlisting in the British Army During the First World War, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 1995, p.195.

⁸²T. Johnstone, Orange, Green and Khaki, The Story of the Irish Regiments in the Great War, 1914-18, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1992, p.198, T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers, The 16th. (Irish) Division in the Great War, 1914-18, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 1992, p.62.

⁸³Letter, J. Redmond to General H. C. Sclater, 27/7/15, Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms.15,225, letters H. H. Asquith to J. Redmond, 1/12/15 and 11/12/15, Redmond papers, Ms.15,165 (5) and T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers, pp.55-6.

Table 5.3. The number of men tried by courts martial while serving in the 16th. (Irish) Division, December 1915 to September 1916.⁸⁴

Unit.	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	T
47th. Brigade.											
6/Royal Irish Regt.	0	1	2	1	1	2	4	2	0	1	14
6/Connaught Rangers	0	6	5	7	11	4	3	12	7	2	57
7/Leinster Regt.	0	3	1	2	1	0	1	3	2	0	13
8/Royal Munster Fus.	0	2	5	6	6	0	4	1	3	1	28
48th. Brigade.											
7/Royal Irish Rifs.	0	3	0	2	3	3	3	2	5	2	23
9/Royal Munster Fus.	0	11	9	4	1	1	/	/	/	/	26
8/Royal Dublin Fus.	0	2	3	5	0	1	7	4	2	0	24
9/Royal Dublin Fus.	0	10	5	5	1	8	7	6	4	4	50
49th. Brigade.											
7/Royal Inns. Fus.	/	/	0	3	3	3	4	1	5	1	20
8/Royal Inns. Fus.	/	/	0	7	2	13	2	1	3	2	30
7/Royal Irish Fus.	/	/	0	1	1	5	9	4	4	0	24
8/Royal Irish Fus.	/	/	0	17	12	6	12	8	15	3	73
Div. Pioneers											
11/Hampshire Regt.	/	/	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

We saw General Hickey [sic] the day before yesterday, and he blamed other Divisions very much for sending their men up into the firing-line right away before they got used to new conditions and Boche habits. He intends to keep us in French billets for a month, to acclimatise us, far away from the war zone. Then a month somewhere behind the lines, taking up officers and men gradually bit by bit for a day or so each, for instructional purposes. Then a

⁸⁴The 9th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers was disbanded in June 1916, therefore the entries for June to September are left blank, as are the returns for 49th. Brigade, which did not arrive in France until February 1916.

month with the whole Division in the trenches, not to take part in attacks, you understand, but to accustom the men to trench life and all that sort of thing.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, some of Hickie's methods were identical to Nugent's, for example in the replacement of officers who were regarded as inefficient. Shortly after their arrival on the Western Front the G.O.C.s of the 47th. and 48th. Brigades were replaced. In January 1916 Lieutenant Colonel G. E. Pereira took command of the 47th. Brigade and Lieutenant Colonel F. W. Ramsay, the 48th. Brigade.⁸⁶ Clearly it was felt that the former G.O.C.s of these brigades were not suitable for front line commands. As Lieutenant General Sir Henry Wilson stated to Parsons;

Hickie has thought it right to replace Br[igadier] Gen[era]l[s] Miles + Buchanan (47th. + 48th. B[riga]des) by younger officers who have had long + varied experience of this war. I have endorsed Hickie's action,...., the command of all units in close contact with the Boch [sic] must be in the hands of young experienced officers.⁸⁷

The removal of Brigadier Generals Miles and Buchanan was, apparently, popular in the 16th. (Irish) Division. As Father J. Wrafter, chaplain of the 8th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, noted;

⁸⁵Letter, Staniforth to his parents, 12/12/15, cited in J. H. M. Staniforth, "Kitchener's Soldier", P.93, I.W.M., 67/41/1.

⁸⁶Entries for 17th. and 18th. January 1916, Assistant Adjutant and Quarter Master General's (16th. (Irish) Division) war diaries, WO95/1957, T. Johnstone, Orange, Green and Khaki, p.203, T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers, p.62.

⁸⁷Letter, Wilson to Parsons, 14/1/16, Parsons's papers, N.L.I., Ms.21,278.

Everyone likes Hickie + he is making things fine. He sacked two brigadier-generals since he came out. It was hard lines on them being sent home before they were a month out, but everyone said he was right.⁸⁸

When the 49th. Brigade arrived in France in February 1916, it likewise received a new G.O.C., Brigadier General P. Levenson-Gower.⁸⁹

A large number of battalion C.O.s were also replaced shortly after the 16th. (Irish) Division landed in France. The first C.O. to be replaced was Lieutenant Colonel D. L. Hartley of the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles who, on the 5th. February 1916 was superseded by Lieutenant Colonel S. G. Francis.⁹⁰ On the 9th. March 1916, Hartley became a Section Commandant in the Royal Defence Corps,⁹¹ suggesting that he was not regarded as fit to command troops on active service. Lieutenant Colonel F. Williams was succeeded by Temporary Lieutenant Colonel E. Monteagle-Browne, as C.O. of the 9th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers on the 12th. February 1916.⁹² Williams had first been commissioned into the 104th. Bengal Fusiliers, in 1879,⁹³ it therefore does not seem surprising that he was retired in 1916.⁹⁴ The last C.O. to be replaced in February 1916 was Lieutenant Colonel M. J. Hughes, who was succeeded by Lieutenant Colonel H. N. Young.⁹⁵ Hughes was, apparently, compulsorily retired.⁹⁶

In March 1916 two further battalions in the 16th. (Irish) Division received new C.O.s. Lieutenant Colonel S. T. Watson took over command of the 8th. Battalion,

⁸⁸Letter, Wrafter to his Father Provincial, 21/1/16, Jesuit Archives, Dublin.

⁸⁹T. Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki*, p.203.

⁹⁰War Office, *Army List for July 1916*, column 1495.

⁹¹War Office, *Army List for December 1916*, column 1621.

⁹²ibid, column 1544a.

⁹³T. P. Dooley, *Irishmen or English Soldiers?*, p.195.

⁹⁴There is no mention of Williams on the active or reserve list of officers after his removal as C.O. of the 9th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, see War Office, *Army List for July 1916* and *Army List for December 1916*.

⁹⁵War Office, *Army List for July 1916*, column 1159.

⁹⁶There is no mention of Hughes in War Office, *Army List for July 1916* and *Army List for December 1916*.

Royal Irish Fusiliers,⁹⁷ his predecessor, Colonel J. S. Brown became C.O. of the 86th. Training Reserve Battalion.⁹⁸ Likewise, on the 14th. March 1916, Lieutenant Colonel F. S. Thackery took over command of the 9th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers.⁹⁹ He succeeded Lieutenant Colonel W. E. G. Connolly, who became C.O. of the 2nd. Garrison Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers in April 1916.¹⁰⁰ Finally, on the 18th. March 1916, Lieutenant Colonel H. J. Downing was relieved of his command, the 8th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Major J. M. Wadmore becoming acting C.O..¹⁰¹ On the 19th. June 1916, Downing took command of the 10th. Reserve Battalion, East Lancashire Regiment.¹⁰²

Therefore Hickie made sweeping changes amongst the senior officers in the 16th. (Irish) Division, replacing all three Brigadier Generals and six battalion commanders. Of course, not all of these officers were completely incompetent, as testified by the fact that many were later posted to command reserve units. It is possible that most of these officers were removed from their commands as, like Lieutenant Colonel Ormerod of the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, their health had collapsed while on active service. Indeed, many officers who had proved perfectly satisfactory as C.O.s of New Army units, while in training, were simply regarded as too old for active service, especially when, in early 1916, there were a number of officers, experienced in trench warfare, available to command these units.

However, it is significant that Lieutenant General Sir Lawrence Parsons had never wanted Lieutenant Colonel H. J. Downing to serve as a C.O. in his division,¹⁰³ while Captain O. L. Beater was certain that Lieutenant Colonel W. E. G. Connolly had been removed for incompetence,¹⁰⁴ and his suspicions are borne out by the recent

⁹⁷War Office, *Army List for July 1916*, column 1508a.

⁹⁸War Office, *Army List for December 1916*, column 1583a.

⁹⁹War Office, *Army List for July 1916*, column 1552a.

¹⁰⁰War Office, *Army List for December 1916*, column 1504e.

¹⁰¹War Office, *Army List for July 1916*, column 1159a.

¹⁰²War Office, *Army List for July 1916*, column 1188.

¹⁰³T. Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers*, p.45.

¹⁰⁴Entry for 8/11/16 in Captain O. L. Beater's diaries, I.W.M., 86/65/1.

release of Connolly's personnel file. In January 1916, Major General W. B. Hickie stated to H.Q., IV Corps;

I have to report that I consider Temp.[orary] L[ieutenant]. Col.[onel] W. E. G. Connolly (retired Major Royal Marines) unfitted for the command of a Battalion, and I beg that he may be relieved at once, from the command of the 9th. [Battalion] Royal Dublin Fusiliers,... I can recommend an officer, now serving with the Division, for the appointment.

As this Battalion is very shortly for a tour of duty in the trenches I beg that I may be empowered to send L[ieutenant]T. Col.[onel] Connolly Home [sic.] pending the receipt of authority for his relief,... He is not educated up to the requirements of modern War,... The Battalion is not well trained or as efficient as it should be. I cannot recommend L[ieutenant]. Col.[onel] Connolly for employment for training purposes. I do not recommend that his services be dispensed with, as there may be work in his late branch of the Service in which he might be useful.¹⁰⁵

Hickie's reservations, with regard to this officer, were well founded. Connolly was relieved of his command of the 2nd. Garrison Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, in May 1917, after carrying out a poorly planned, and costly, trench raid, at Salonika. As Lieutenant General G. F. Milne stated; "the state of discipline in his [Connolly's] Battalion was bad and the raid, largely due to vague orders and to want of organisation, entirely failed, ending in a most discreditable retreat, I am sending him home."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵Letter, Hickie to H.Q., IV Corps, 25/1/16, contained in the personnel file of Lieutenant Colonel W. E. G. Connolly, P.R.O., WO339/7608.

¹⁰⁶Letter, Milne to Secretary, War Office, 30/5/17, in *ibid.* The personnel records of other C.O.s replaced when the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions arrived in France were not available in the P.R.O., WO339 series.

Nevertheless, the pruning of senior officers in the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions, while drastic, was not an atypical experience for New Army units embarking on active service. For example, two Brigadier Generals in the 38th. (Welsh) Division were replaced by younger officers before this formation embarked for overseas service.¹⁰⁷

As in the case of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, units of the 16th. (Irish) Division did not behave particularly well in their first tour of duty in the trenches. As J. H. M. Staniforth, then a Second Lieutenant in the 7th. Battalion, Leinster Regiment, noted in January 1916;

We have got rather a bad name in the English Division to which we were attached in the trenches, because the men would not keep under cover in the daytime, and we had to put the sergeant-major with a rifle loaded with candle-grease bullets to keep them in the trenches.¹⁰⁸

Likewise, Brigadier General Frederick Shaw, the then acting G.O.C. of the 48th. Brigade, informed Parsons of the; "Breaking up of discipline", of the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles and 9th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, while in the trenches.¹⁰⁹

However, in general, the trench discipline in the 16th. (Irish) Division was seen as good, as Lieutenant Colonel William Rennie, a senior staff officer in the 16th. (Irish) Division, commented;

The 48th. [Brigade] have finished their attachment in the trenches it was of a pretty practical nature as it entailed about seventy casualties

¹⁰⁷C. Hughes, Mametz, Lloyd George's 'Welsh Army' at the Battle of the Somme, Gliddon Books, London, 1990, p.38.

¹⁰⁸Letter, Staniforth to his parents, 30/1/16, cited in J. H. M. Staniforth, "Kitchener's Soldier", I.W.M., 67/41/1.

¹⁰⁹Entry for 10/2/16 in Parsons' diary, N.L.I., Ms. 21,524.

including seven junior officers,...., the 48th. [Brigade] as far as one could learn did well except in such matters as looking after their trench stores + similar side issues,.... He [Major General Hickie] was very pleased with the 8th. Munsters [i.e. 8th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers] today marching to forward billets + I think that battalion are going to end by doing very well indeed. Williamson's rough + ready methods seem really to have got a grip of this tough lot of Limericks which he collected.¹¹⁰

Similarly, Lieutenant Colonel Fitzroy Curzon, C.O. of the 6th. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, noted that the 47th. Brigade had received "a good report of our men's behaviour in the trenches", and that, as a result, none of the battalion C.O.s in the Brigade were to be replaced.¹¹¹

The actual performance of the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions in action during the October 1915 to September 1916 period, demonstrated no serious disciplinary problems and indeed, these actions have been well covered elsewhere.¹¹² However, in terms of assessing the development of each division, it is worth examining three separate engagements: Hulluch, in March 1916, which brought into question gas discipline in the 16th. (Irish) Division; the performance of the 36th. (Ulster) Division on the 1st. July 1916, in which this formation, unlike most other units in the British army, achieved its objectives, and finally, the performance of the 16th. (Irish) Division at Ginchy in September 1916, when units, which were already desperately under-strength were sent into the attack.

Hulluch, in early 1916, was seen as a relatively quiet part of the front line and, as a result, the 16th. (Irish) Division, as an untried formation, was, on the 27th. March,

¹¹⁰Letter, Rennie to Parsons, 15/1/16, N.L.I., Ms. 21,278.

¹¹¹Letter, Fitzroy Curzon to Parsons, 8/2/16, Parsons papers, N.L.I., Ms. 21, 278.

¹¹²See especially, T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers, pp.59-103, C. Falls, The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, pp.22-75, T. Johnstone, Orange, Green and Khaki, pp.224-256, P. Orr, The Road to the Somme, Men of the Ulster Division Tell Their Story, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 1987, pp.85-203 and M. Staunton, "Ginchy: Nationalist Ireland's forgotten Battle of the Somme", An Cosantoir, 1986, pp.24-6.

given the responsibility of defending this sector.¹¹³ However, on the 27th. April, the 16th. (Irish) Division suffered heavy casualties from a gas attack.¹¹⁴ A number of contemporaries alleged that these losses were a result of poor gas discipline in the division.¹¹⁵

Certainly the gas discipline of the 16th. (Irish) Division was not excellent and some panic did set in.¹¹⁶ Also, a number of soldiers appear to have thought it very unlikely that the Germans would use gas again; indeed Father William Doyle, chaplain to the 8th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, attributed his survival to divine intervention;

I must confess for a moment I got a shock, as a gas attack was the very last thing I was thinking about - in fact we thought the Germans had given it up,.... That morning as I was leaving my dugout I threw my helmet aside. I had a fairly long walk before me, the helmet is a bit heavy on a hot day, and, as I said, German gas was most unlikely. So I made up my mind to leave it behind. In view of what happened, it may appear imagination now, but a voice seemed to whisper loudly in my ear: 'Take your helmet with you; don't leave without it.' I turned back and slung it over my shoulder.¹¹⁷

Doyle further noted that some men did not put on their gas masks, others had torn or lost them.¹¹⁸

Nevertheless, at the time, a number of officers, including Hickie himself, felt that the 16th. (Irish) Division had behaved well under this attack.¹¹⁹ Objective

¹¹³T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers, pp.67-8.

¹¹⁴ibid, p.69.

¹¹⁵See the comments of A. Solly Flood, 25/7/29, C. Grant, 30/4/29 and J. K. D. Cunyngham, 20/5/29, P.R.O., CAB 45/2898, cited, ibid, p.70.

¹¹⁶G. A. Cooper Walker, The Book of the Seventh Service Battalion, The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers from Tipperary to Ypres, Brindley and Son Printers, Dublin, 1920, pp.35-8.

¹¹⁷Undated letter from Doyle, cited in A. O'Rahilly, Father William Doyle, S.J., Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1922, p.233.

¹¹⁸ibid, p.237.

research has suggested that high casualties at Hulluch were mainly due to defective gas masks, the 'sack helmet' then in use being useless in concentrated gas clouds.¹²⁰ Certainly, it would appear that while gas training in the 16th. (Irish) Division was far from extensive, it was rather better than that in some other New Army formations, for example, the 31st. Division.¹²¹

The experience of the 36th. (Ulster) Division on the 1st. July 1916 is of importance due to its comparatively successful attack on that day. This, in itself, raises the question of how had a formation which had, frankly, suffered from a multitude of problems in October 1915, become one of the most successful in the British army a mere nine months later?

Initially, it should be noted that the attack was severely compromised by the orders of Fourth Army that senior officers should not accompany their troops into action.¹²² This removal of senior officers (in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, C.O.s, Majors and Regimental Sergeant Majors, amongst others, were held back) especially when this was, effectively, the first time that the 36th. (Ulster) Division went into action, was to mean that the attack lost momentum and inadequate preparations were made to meet German counter attacks.¹²³ These orders, themselves, led to some indiscipline in the division, as Colonel H. C. Bernard, C.O. of the 10th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles and Lieutenant Colonel F. P. Crozier, C.O. of the 9th. Battalion,

¹¹⁹G. A. Cooper Walker, The Book of the Seventh Service Battalion, The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, pp.40-42 and T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers, p.71.

¹²⁰T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers, pp.70-1 and M. Staunton, "The Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Great War, 1914-18", unpublished M.A. thesis, University College, Dublin, 1986, p.228.

¹²¹B. S. Barnes, This Righteous War, Richard Netherwood Limited, Huddersfield, 1990, p.53.

¹²²T. Johnstone, Orange, Green and Khaki, p.228, P. Orr, The Road to the Somme, p.200 and F. P. Crozier, A Brass Hat in No Man's Land, pp.97-8.

¹²³T. Johnstone, Orange, Green and Khaki, p.233, G. S. Mitchell, 'Three Cheers for the Derrys!', A History of the 10th. Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in the 1914-18 War, Yes! Publications, Derry, 1991, p.102, P. Orr, The Road to the Somme, pp.181-2.

Royal Irish Rifles, disobeyed these orders and took part in the attack.¹²⁴ Bernard was killed in action and Crozier faced no disciplinary action.

The attack also witnessed some cases of straggling, especially after most of the officers had been killed and German counter attacks were taking place. Crozier witnessed a second lieutenant firing into a group of men, forcing them to return to the line.¹²⁵ Likewise, Captain W. A. Montgomery, of the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles and Major W. J. Peacocke, of the 9th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers rallied a group of around 40 stragglers.¹²⁶

While many men of the 36th. (Ulster) Division did act with great bravery on the 1st. July 1916, it would appear that the success of the attack had much more to do with tactical planning than excellent discipline. Major General Nugent, unlike most officers on the 1st. July, ordered his men into No Man's Land ten to fifteen minutes before zero hour.¹²⁷ As Myles Dungan comments, Nugent's decision, "was to prove crucial in the almost unprecedented gains made on 1 July by his Division."¹²⁸ This decision meant that units of the division were attacking the German front line, seconds after the barrage lifted, at the time most other British units were just leaving their trenches.

Equally, the artillery support given to the 36th. (Ulster) Division was superior to that afforded to most British formations. T. Travers notes that, at a time when many artillery barrages were based on guesswork, officers of the 36th. (Ulster) Divisional Artillery were carrying out much more accurate, predicted shooting off a 1:10,000 map.¹²⁹

¹²⁴F. P. Crozier, A Brass Hat in No Man's Land, pp.97-8.

¹²⁵ibid, p.110.

¹²⁶P. Orr, The Road to the Somme, pp.181-3.

¹²⁷C. Falls, The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, pp.51-2 and P. Orr, The Road to the Somme, p.165.

¹²⁸M. Dungan, Irish Voices from the Great War, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 1995, p.109.

¹²⁹T. Travers, The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front & the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900-1918, Routledge, London, 1993, pp.162-3.

However, having considered these points, in terms of discipline we should note that following the 1st. July 1916, the numbers of men tried by courts martial in the 36th. (Ulster) Division generally fell (see table 5.2). This was in sharp contrast to the 46th. (Midland) Division which, following heavy losses on the Somme experienced a large increase in its crime rate and the 56th. (London) Division which saw a minimal increase in the numbers of men tried by courts martial.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, there were some breaches of discipline in units of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, and the fall in the number of men tried by courts martial may simply demonstrate that following a major offensive, officers were unwilling to refer disciplinary cases to courts martial. Private Ellison Whitley, who, as a member of the 1/7th. Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment, was sent to relieve the 36th. (Ulster) Division on the night of the 1/2nd. July remembered; "The Ulster [sic] Rifles who were still alive were all roaring drunk." While Private James A Eastburn of the 1/8th. Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment recalled; "the trenches were jammed with drunks."¹³¹

Following this battle, the 36th. (Ulster) Division appears to have experienced low morale. Even Cyril Falls, the divisional historian, acknowledged this, although, by the 12th. July he felt that; "confidence was returning," to the division.¹³² Rifleman John Doran of the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, confessed to his mother;

I don't feel in very good form after what we have went through so this note will be very short but I will write a longer one when I get my mind settled a little it was our first big fight and I am not feeling at all like myself.¹³³

¹³⁰J. Brent Wilson, "The Morale and Discipline of the B.E.F., 1914-18", unpublished M.A. thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1978, p.199.

¹³¹Whitley's and Eastburn's accounts are cited in, P. Morris, "Leeds and the Amateur Military Tradition: The Leeds Rifles and their Antecedents, c.1859-1918", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Leeds, 1983, p.586.

¹³²C. Falls, *The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division*, p.63.

¹³³Letter, Doran to his mother, 3/7/16, I.W.M., Misc.89, item 1306.

Likewise, Lieutenant Maxwell, of the 16th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, wrote, on the 10th. July;

Now we are resting, but the experiences of the first week in July, 1916, will long remain as unpleasant memories that we long to curtain and blot out for ever. But even time can not erase these incidents - they are carved deep on our memories, haunting us in our waking moments like ghastly spectres, reminding us unceasingly of what the horrors of war really are, and reviewing again our sorrow for the loss of gallant comrades.¹³⁴

Finally, in assessing discipline in action, some mention should be made of the 16th. (Irish) Division's attack on Ginchy, on the 9th. September 1916. Both morale and discipline appear to have been maintained in this action, which is rather surprising, given that the battalions had been used 'piecemeal' in support of other units,¹³⁵ and were seriously understrength before the attack. Indeed, before the attack, the 47th. Brigade was close to battalion strength, with just 1,318 men.¹³⁶ Many officers felt that, given this situation, the men should not be asked to assault Ginchy.¹³⁷ Major Rowland Feilding, who had become C.O. of the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers on the 7th. September, after the deaths, at Guillemont, of Lieutenant Colonel J. Lenox-Conyngham and his second in command, certainly held this view. His 'battalion' consisted of just 200 men, 91 of them from a recent draft,¹³⁸ and, as he commented; "Those that were not raw recruits from the new drafts were worn out and exhausted by their recent fighting, and much more fitted for a rest camp than an attack."¹³⁹

¹³⁴Letter, cited in, S. N. White, The Terrors, 16th. (Pioneer) Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, Somme Association, Belfast, 1996, p.101.

¹³⁵T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers, p.83.

¹³⁶ibid, p.96.

¹³⁷ibid, p.95.

¹³⁸R. Feilding, War Letters to a Wife, France and Flanders, 1915-19, The Medici Society Ltd., London, 1929, pp.111-3.

¹³⁹ibid, p.117.

Despite these difficulties, the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers only suffered from one serious disciplinary breakdown at Ginchy, when, during the battle, the adjutant went sick. His replacement, a young second lieutenant, felt that the only illness his predecessor was suffering from was; “wind up.”¹⁴⁰

Indeed, in general, it was felt that the discipline of the 16th. (Irish) Division had held up well. Major General W. B. Hickie noted; “The Division leaves the Somme with a very high reputation for discipline and good behaviour as well as for fighting.”¹⁴¹ Meanwhile, the C.O. of the 9th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers commented;

When you come to think that we had bad weather + that our Brigade were five days in so-called trenches before we made the attack [on Ginchy] with never a hot meal and not much water their performance was wonderful,..., after all our trials + loss when the remnants of my Battalion had accomplished a tiring dirty march of eleven miles the men sailed into the billets splendidly dressed and singing ‘Brian Boru’. The next morning we paid the men + that afternoon every man had all his brass work shining + boots cleaned.¹⁴²

These battles, with their attendant losses had, of course, serious repercussions for New Army units in terms of drafts. As early as September 1915, James Craig, M.P. had stated;

the only fear in my mind is the break up of the Ulster [Division], in the event of casualties being heavy. The Reserve Battalions are not filling up as

¹⁴⁰Interview with Colonel F. W. Seymour Jourdain, I.W.M., Sound Archives, 11214/4.

¹⁴¹Letter, Hickie to Parsons, 17/9/16, Parsons papers, N.L.I., Ms.21,278.

¹⁴²Letter Lieutenant Colonel E. Bellingham to Parsons, 20/9/16, Parsons papers, N.L.I., Ms.21,278.

they should and consequently some of your batt[alion]s. when wasted away may be replaced by 'strangers', or, worse again, yours [sic] Batt[alio]ns. may be given away to fill other Armies!¹⁴³

Craig had good reason to be concerned about the reserve battalions of the 36th. (Ulster) Division. In early January 1916, it was established that, since the 10th. October 1915, the 10th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers had recruited just 284 men, the 12th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 583, the 17th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, 271, the 18th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, 672, the 19th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, 341 and the 20th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, just 77.¹⁴⁴ By March 1916, Craig was reporting that recruits in Ireland had; "dried up + there is no sign of any improvement."¹⁴⁵

Officers in the 16th. (Irish) Division were also expressing concern about reinforcements. In September 1916, Lieutenant Colonel Bellingham, C.O., 8th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, wrote; "Tomorrow we come out + it will be only a poor little shadow of a Division. There is every hope of our being filled up with English [drafts] as the other sort simply don't exist."¹⁴⁶

The impact of drafting non-Irish soldiers into Irish New Army units during this stage of the war is unclear. The then Private W. E. Collins, drafted into the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, from the 25th. Battalion, London Regiment, remembered receiving a good welcome in his new unit, continuing ; "The [9th.] R.[oyal] I[rish] R.[ifles] when I joined them had come back from the Somme 16 strong out of 600 men and so they were only too pleased to get all the reinforcements they could."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³Letter, James Craig, M.P. to Major Wilfrid Spender, G.S.O. 2, 36th. (Ulster) Division, 24/9/15, Spender papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.1295/3/11.

¹⁴⁴Letter from General J. S. Cowans [?] to Mathew Nathan, 9/1/16, Joseph Brennan papers, N.L.I., Ms.26,191.

¹⁴⁵Letter, Craig to Spender, 26/3/16, Spender papers, D.1295/4/3.

¹⁴⁶Letter, Bellingham to Parsons, 9/9/16, Parsons' papers, N.L.I., Ms.21,278.

¹⁴⁷Interview with W. E. Collins, I.W.M., Sound Archive, 14142/1.

However, service battalions had built up a firm *esprit de corps* and men were reluctant to leave them. J. H. M. Staniforth, in hospital with scabies in August 1916 commented;

they have started a poisonous system of pooling all drafts at the Base and sending them to the unit that needs them most; so although its not often done with officers, its quite on the cards that I might find myself packed off to the West Rutlandshire Militia instead of the 7th. (S[ervice]) B[attalion]n., P.[rince] O.[f] W.[ales] Leinster Regiment.¹⁴⁸

Equally, some men of the 10th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, wounded on the 1st. July 1916, were, when they had recovered, posted to the 1st. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, in August 1916. As one veteran remembered, "Every day we used to report to the Commanding Officer of the 1st. Battalion and requested to be sent back to our Battalion, but again and again we were refused."¹⁴⁹

One major event of this period, the Easter Rising, is important to assess with relevance to its impact on Irish soldiers serving on the Western Front. A number of historians, commenting on this issue, have concluded that the Rising had no detrimental impact on Irish troops.¹⁵⁰ The courts martial held in Irish regiments serving on the Western Front, between October 1915 and September 1916 (as detailed in tables, 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3) would appear to confirm this analysis. The aforementioned

¹⁴⁸Letter, Staniforth to his parents, 28/8/16, cited in J. H. M. Staniforth, "Kitchener's Soldier", p.180, I.W.M., 67/41/1.

¹⁴⁹G. Mitchell, 'Three Cheers for the Derrys!', p.126.

¹⁵⁰G. Dallas and D. Gill, The Unknown Army: Mutinies in the British Army in World War I, Verso, London, 1985, p.58, T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers, p.144, K. Jeffery, "The Irish Military Tradition and the British Empire", in K. Jeffrey (ed.), 'An Irish Empire? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1996, p.106, P. Karsten, "Irish Soldiers in the British Army, 1792 - 1922: Suborned or Subordinate?", Journal of Social History, 19, 1983, pp.41-2, J. Leonard, "The Reactions of Irish Officers in the British Army to the Easter Rising of 1916", in H. Cecil and P. H. Liddle, (eds.), Facing Armageddon, The First World War Experienced, Leo Cooper, London, 1996, p.265.

tables demonstrate that there was no great upsurge in the numbers of men tried by courts martial in May or June 1916, when news of the Rising reached the front.

However, three issues should be emphasised relating to the reaction of Irish soldiers to the Rising. Firstly, some soldiers did have some sympathy for the rebels. John Lucy, then a sergeant in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, noted;

My fellow soldiers had no great sympathy with the rebels, but they got fed up when they heard of the executions of the leaders. I experienced a cold fury, because I would see the whole British Empire damned sooner than hear of an Irishman being killed in his own country by any intruding stranger.¹⁵¹

Secondly, a number of men who had republican sympathies served, without any disciplinary problems, in the British army, until they were demobilised at the end of the war. Some prime examples are Tom Barry, who served in the Royal Artillery in the Middle East during the war, but, in 1919, was leading I.R.A. units in Cork,¹⁵² and, of more relevance to this study, Second Lieutenant Emmet d'Alton, who won the Military Cross, serving with the 9th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers at Ginchy, but post-war, became a leading figure in the Dublin I.R.A..¹⁵³

Thirdly, the response of Irish battalions on the Western Front to the Rising varied enormously. The trench journal of the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, writing from a firm unionist perspective, carried a strongly worded editorial stating;

What about the Sinn Feiner business? Soldiers are not allowed to talk politics, otherwise much might be said. Speaking for ourselves, we'd rather

¹⁵¹J. F. Lucy, There's a Devil in the Drum, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1938, pp.351-2.

¹⁵²T. Barry, Guerrilla Days in Ireland, Anvil Books Ltd., Dublin, 1981, especially, pp.1-2.

¹⁵³M. Dungan, Irish Voices from the Great War, p.138 and C. Dalton, With the Dublin Brigade, 1917-1921, Peter Davies Ltd., London, 1929, p.127.

have seen a little less mercy to some of the rebels. If a man out here plays any old tricks he is given short shrift - shot at daybreak. Remember this man may have fought long and sturdily for his Empire - but still he'd be shot. Then what kind of death do those insurgent dogs deserve - those swine who seize upon the fact that the soldiery is away, fighting and dying to save Sinn Feiner worthless skins - to rifle and riot and murder a whole host of innocent people. Ugh! Doesn't it make your blood boil lads?¹⁵⁴

The same issue carried an 'advertisement' stating;

Wanted.

1,000 Sinn Feiners to replace lost and deported comrades. Applicants must be thieves, murderers or opium maniacs. Hereditary insanity a recommendation. No honest man need apply.

Also required, a Sound Scheme for blowing up Cork, Limerick and the last few standing stones of Dublin.

Also required, a New Leader. Any qualified Nationalist may apply.¹⁵⁵

Those serving in service battalions with a more nationalist ethos, equally felt little sympathy for the rebels. Lieutenant T. M. Kettle, a former I.P.P., M.P., then serving in the 9th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, wrote;

The Sinn Fein nightmare upset me a little, but then if you tickle the ear of an elephant with a pop-gun, and he walks on you that is a natural concatenation of events. We took the side of justice, we did the right thing, we helped to bring North and South together.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴*The Incinerator*, June 1916, p.19.

¹⁵⁵*ibid*, back cover.

¹⁵⁶Letter, T. M. Kettle to Sir Henry McLaughlin, 7/8/16, McLaughlin papers,

In other units, especially regular ones, there appears to have been little interest in the Rising. Father Henry Gill noted that, in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles; "On the whole the event created very little comment."¹⁵⁷ Meanwhile, Private A. R. Brennan, serving in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment remembered; "Although we were all mildly interested, nobody took the thing very seriously."¹⁵⁸

Finally, some battalions made a point of demonstrating their opposition to the Rising, to the Germans. The 8th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers captured a placard erected by the Germans which read; "Irishmen! Heavy uproar in Ireland, english [sic] guns are firing at your wives and children! 1st. May 1916."¹⁵⁹ S. McCance states that the 8th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers organised a raid to capture this placard and also; "straffed the huns."¹⁶⁰ However, both M. Staunton and T. Dooley believe that a patrol simply found these in an abandoned dugout.¹⁶¹ In whatever fashion this placard was acquired, it is significant that it was presented to the king by Lieutenant Colonel Williamson.¹⁶²

The response of the 7th. Battalion, Leinster Regiment was rather different;

The Germans put up three large placards this morning. One said, 'IRISHMAN: [sic] GREAT UPROAR IN IRELAND ENGLISH GUNS ARE FIRING ON YOUR WIFES [sic] AND CHILDREN.' Another said, 'KUT CAPTURED 13,000 ENGLISH PRISONERS!' The third and largest said, 'IRISHMAN! [sic] IN IRELAND REVOLUTION ENGLISH GUNS FIRING ON YOUR WIFES [sic] AND CHILDREN ENGLISH

P.R.O.N.I., D.3809/67/2.

¹⁵⁷H. V. Gill, "As seen by a Chaplain", p.80, Jesuit Archives, Dublin.

¹⁵⁸The First World War Diary of Private A. R. Brennan, p.7, I.W.M., p.262.

¹⁵⁹cited, T. P. Dooley, "The Royal Munster Fusiliers", *History Ireland*, 6, 1, 1998, p.38.

¹⁶⁰S. Mc Cance, *History of the Royal Munster Fusiliers*, vol.II, p.197.

¹⁶¹T. P. Dooley, "The Royal Munster Fusiliers", p.38 and M. Staunton, "The Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Great War", p.230.

¹⁶²M. Staunton, "The Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Great War", p.230.

DREADNOUGHT SUNK. ENGLISH MILITARY BILL REFUSED. SIR ROGER CASEMENT PERSECUTED. THROW YOUR ARMS AWAY. WE WILL GIVE YOU A HEARTY WELCOME.' Aren't they impudent devils? We played Rule Britannia and lots of Irish airs on a melodeon in the front trench to show them we weren't exactly downhearted. It was a company commander who played, and he stuck to it for an hour, although they push all sorts of stuff at him. We also stuck up a notice which annoyed them so much that they threw rifle grenades at it. 'PLEASE TELL YOUR DESERTERS TO COME OVER SINGLY NEXT TIME, AS THE LAST SIX WERE TAKEN FOR A PATROL AND UNFORTUNATELY FIRED UPON'. which was a fact.¹⁶³

The 9th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers adopted a similar policy. They hung an effigy of Sir Roger Casement in No Man's Land.¹⁶⁴

Finally, in assessing discipline in Irish units during this period, something should be said regarding comparisons between the various Irish battalions and the relationship of discipline in Irish units to that in the B.E.F. as a whole. The first point to make, relating to comparisons between Irish units, is that the number of men tried by courts martial was generally lower in service, than regular battalions. Secondly, the number of men tried in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, was lower than in the 16th. (Irish) Division. Thirdly, it should be noted that the transition from training in the United Kingdom to active service affected service battalions differently. If we compare table 4.5 with tables 5.2 and 5.3 this becomes clear. For example, the crime rate in the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers rose on active service, while that of the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, fell.

¹⁶³Letter, J. H. M. Staniforth to his parents, 1/5/16, in Staniforth, "Kitchener's Soldier", pp.157-8, I.W.M., 67/41/1.

¹⁶⁴J. Leonard, "The Reactions of Irish Officers in the British Army to the Easter Rising", p.263 and M. Staunton, "The Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Great War", p.231.

In chapter three, it was demonstrated, admittedly with the use of a very small non-Irish sample, that Irish units had a much larger number of men tried by court martial than their counterparts from Great Britain. Table 5.4 (below), if compared with tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 demonstrates that this is no longer the case.

Table 5.4. The number of men tried by courts martial, while serving in sample non-Irish units, October 1915 to September 1916.¹⁶⁵

Unit.	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	T
1/A.I.F.	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	0	0	0	0
1/Gloucestershire Regt.	0	0	1	7	1	0	4	10	2	5	3	1	34
1/14th. London Regt.	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Anson Batt.	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0	0	0	2	2
1/K.O.S.B.	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	3	1	1	3	3	11
2/South Wales Brds.	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	3	1	1	2	1	8
1/Border Regt.	/	/	/	/	/	1	10	7	6	4	9	2	39
6/Cameron Higs.	0	2	0	2	0	6	3	1	3	1	2	1	21
26/Northumberland Fus.	/	/	/	0	0	2	3	1	2	0	1	0	9
14/Royal Welsh Fus.	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	6	3	0	0	15
6/Gordon Higs.	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	3

A number of Irish regular units, for example, the 2nd. Battalions of the Irish Guards and Royal Irish Regiment, compare favourably with their non-Irish counterparts, while the crime rate in the 14th. Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers is higher than that of five battalions in the 36th. (Ulster) Division.

In broader terms, it is interesting to note that the Anson Battalion of the 63rd. (Royal Naval) Division, although raised as a wartime expedient and outside the British

¹⁶⁵As with table 5.1, in cases where units spent part of this period in other theatres, these months are indicated with a “/”.

regimental structure, had a commendable record, during the period May to September 1916, while serving on the Western Front.

Another point worthy of note is the great variation between non-Irish, as well as Irish units serving in the same formation. The 1st. Battalion, King's Own Scottish Borderers, 2nd. battalion, South Wales Borderers, 1st. Battalion, Border Regiment and 1st. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers comprised the 87th. Brigade, 29th. Division, yet each battalion had its own, distinctive courts martial profile. Finally, the examples of the North Irish Horse, South Irish Horse (Special Reserve units) and 1/14th. London (Scottish) Regiment and 6th. Battalion, Gordon Highlanders, (Territorial Force units), suggests that the discipline of units which, pre-war had been reserve formations only, was very good.

An examination of tables, 5.5 and 5.6 (overleaf) demonstrates some interesting issues. Firstly, a number of service battalions (for example, the 8th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, 14th. Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers and 26th. Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers) have patterns of offences which are very similar to regular units, with drunkenness remaining a persistent problem in regular and service battalions. Secondly, desertion appears to have been a much more serious problem in the Irish units. However, when comparing tables 5.5 and 5.6, what is striking are the similarities between the types of military crime committed by Irish and non-Irish units.

This is also a striking feature in comparing tables 5.7 and 5.8 (overleaf). In April and May 1916, some senior officers had expressed concerns about the loyalty of Irish units. Private A. R. Brennan noted that the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment was kept in reserve for two weeks, in case there was a reaction to events in Dublin.¹⁶⁶ Meanwhile the 1st. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers was withdrawn from the front line due to similar concerns,¹⁶⁷ and the C.O. of the 1st. Battalion, Irish Guards was

¹⁶⁶A. R. Brennan's diary, p.7, I.W.M., P.262.

¹⁶⁷Letter to the authors from John Murphy, September 1965, cited in G. Dallas and D. Gill, *The Unknown Army*, p.59.

Table 5.5. Offences for which men serving in a sample number of Irish units were tried by courts martial, October 1915 to September 1916.

Offences	6/	8/	8/	9/	13/	10/	14/	2/	1/	5th.	N.	
	C.R.	RDF	Inns	I.	I.	Inns	I.	RDF	I.	Inns	Lan	I.
War Treason	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D.O.R.A.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Offence against an inhabitant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mutiny	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cowardice	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Desertion	1	1	1	3	0	1	0	10	11	3	1	0
Absence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Striking/violent	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0
Insubordination	5	0	1	2	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	1
Disobedience	4	2	5	2	0	1	0	9	1	0	0	0
Quitting post	4	0	2	2	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0
Drunkenness	10	3	10	12	5	6	2	43	18	13	4	0
Injuring property	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Loss of property	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Theft	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Indecency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Resisting escort	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Escaping confinement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Misc. and multiple offences	31	17	10	10	3	17	6	26	32	16	9	9
Misc. civil offences	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Self inflicted wound	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fraudulent enlistment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enlisting after discharge with disgrace	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
False answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neglect	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fraud	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	57	24	30	31	8	26	8	95	67	36	15	10

Table 5.6. Offences for which men serving in sample non - Irish units were tried by courts martial, October 1915 to September 1916.

Offences	1/ Glou	Anson	1/ KO SB	2/ SWB	1/ Bord- er	6/ Cam. High	26/ N.F.	14/ R. W. F.	6/ Gord Highs
War Treason	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D.O.R.A.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Offence against an inhabitant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mutiny	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cowardice	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Desertion	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Absence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Striking/Violent	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Insubordination	2	0	0	0	3	1	2	0	0
Disobedience	2	0	2	1	1	1	0	2	0
Quitting post	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	0
Drunkeness	8	0	4	1	5	7	2	6	1
Injuring property	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Loss of property	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Theft	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Indecency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Resisting escort	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Escaping confinement	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Misc. and multiple offences	13	2	4	4	25	10	5	7	2
Misc. civil offences	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Self inflicted wound	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fraudulent enlistment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enlisting after discharge with disgrace	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
False answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neglect	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fraud	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	34	2	11	8	39	21	9	15	3

called to the War Office to discuss the implications of the Rising on his men.¹⁶⁸ However, these fears do not appear to have resulted in a harsher sentencing policy for men serving in Irish units, tried by courts martial.

Table 5.7. Sentences passed on men serving in sample Irish units, tried by courts martial, October 1915 to September 1916.

Sentence	6/		8/		10/		2/		1/		Lan- cers	NIH
	CR	RDF	Inns	R.I.	R.I.	Inns	R.I.	RDF	R.I.	Inns		
Death	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Penal Servitude	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	0
Hard Labour	6	1	0	3	0	3	0	7	10	3	4	0
Imprisonment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Detention	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
F.P. 1	29	14	15	14	4	15	6	60	30	15	3	7
F.P. 2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	6	0	0
Discharged with ignominy/cashiered	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reduced/reprimanded	8	6	1	7	3	2	1	7	8	2	2	1
Stoppages, fines, etc.	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Quashed/not confirmed	1	0	3	1	0	1	0	4	2	1	1	0
Suspended sentence	1	0	4	4	0	2	0	13	5	1	1	0
Not guilty, acquitted, etc.	9	2	7	0	1	3	1	2	7	5	4	1
TOTALS	57	24	30	31	8	26	8	95	67	36	15	10

¹⁶⁸T. Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers*, p.143.

During the period October 1915 to September 1916 a number of policies were used to attempt to maintain morale in the B.E.F.. Traditional 'morale builders' such as battalion and divisional sports were organised and the traditional St. Patrick's Day 'holiday' observed. While chaplains continued to be seen as important in maintaining morale and a collection of military and civilian leaders visited Irish units. Other, more modern concepts, also made their appearance; divisional concert troops, cinemas, baths and comforts funds were all seen as useful in building morale. While, in the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions, use was made of political emblems. Finally, and most controversially, trench raids were seen as an important morale booster.

Sporting events remained, probably the most popular ways of maintaining morale, with, in turn, soccer remaining the most popular event. In April 1916 the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers and 10th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers played a match against each other, apparently as part of a Divisional Cup game.¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile, in December 1915, the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, had inter-company and officers against sergeants matches, prior to a match with the 11th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers,¹⁷⁰ and officers were keen to maintain a supply of footballs for men in the 5th. Lancers.¹⁷¹

Equestrian events also remained popular. In May 1916, the officers of "D" Squadron, 5th. Lancers, organised a steeplechase, which consisted of two races and on which a sweepstake was held.¹⁷² Less ambitiously there was a mule race organised in the 36th. (Ulster) Division in April 1916.¹⁷³ Captain L. B. Brierly, serving as a Staff Officer in the 16th. (Irish) Division, noted; "Being an Irish Division, when out of the line we would have Horse Shows, driving and riding events."¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹Captain E. A. Godson Papers, p.4, I.W.M., p.446.

¹⁷⁰*The Incinerator*, May 1916, p.11.

¹⁷¹Letter, Captain J. A. T. Rice to his mother, 21/10/15, N.A.M. 7511-80-140.

¹⁷²Letter, same to father, 21/5/16, N.A.M., 7511-80-204.

¹⁷³E. A. Godson papers, p.4, I.W.M., p.446.

¹⁷⁴L. B. Brierly, unpublished manuscript entitled, "A Civilian's Military Career", p.4, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds.

Table 5.8. Sentences passed on men serving in sample non-Irish units, tried by courts martial, October 1915 to September 1916.

Sentence	1/KOS		1/Bor 6/Cam		14/RW 6/Gord				
	1/Glo.	Anson	B	2/SWB	der	Highs.	26/N.F	F	Highs.
Death	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Penal Servitude	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Hard Labour	4	0	1	0	1	1	0	2	0
Imprisonment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Detention	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Field Punishment 1	21	0	6	1	18	14	3	5	3
Field Punishment 2	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Discharged with ignominy/cashiered	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reduced/reprimanded	3	0	2	2	6	2	3	1	0
Stoppages/fines, etc.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Quashed/not confirmed	0	0	1	1	3	0	1	3	0
Suspended sentence	3	0	1	2	2	2	1	1	0
Not guilty/acquitted, etc.	2	2	0	2	6	2	1	0	0
TOTALS	34	2	11	8	39	21	9	15	3

Chaplains also retained their role in maintaining morale. Father Gill obtained a 'parlour cinematograph' from Messrs. Butlers of Dublin and showed six different films each week to men of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, until the resumption of

open warfare in 1918.¹⁷⁵ Gill also gave a demonstration of 'muscular Christianity', when he accompanied his battalion in an attack on a German trench. Following his part in this action, Gill was recommended for a Distinguished Service Order.¹⁷⁶

Father F. M. Browne, appointed Chaplain to the 1st. Battalion, Irish Guards, in March 1916 was warmly welcomed by the C.O., who stated; "You are the man we have been wishing for since Fr. Gwynn's death we have been wishing for an Irishman + a Jesuit."¹⁷⁷ Browne noted that men of the 1st. Battalion, Irish Guards voluntarily found and cleared out a room in an old barracks and furnished it with salvaged furniture, to serve as his chapel.¹⁷⁸

In the 36th. (Ulster) Division, chaplains and religion in general, were also seen as important in maintaining morale. When the 16th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles first went on active service, Reverend Gibson, from Lurgan, had been the battalion's Presbyterian Chaplain. However, when it was found that most men in the battalion were members of the Church of Ireland, he was replaced by a chaplain of that denomination. Lieutenant Colonel Leader, finding his new chaplain, "useless" re-applied for Gibson's services, even though he was an Anglican himself - which brought him into conflict with Major General Nugent.¹⁷⁹ Major W. B. Spender, G.S.O.2, 36th. (Ulster) Division, commented on the religious observance of the men, noting the surprise of the G.O.C., 4th. Division that so many Ulstermen read their bibles while in billets.¹⁸⁰

Regimental holidays were also useful in maintaining morale, the most important for Irish regiments being St. Patrick's Day. Brigadier General Pereria,

¹⁷⁵H. V. Gill, "As Seen by a Chaplain", pp.57-8, Jesuit Archives, Dublin.

¹⁷⁶Letter, Redmond to H. J. Tennant, 11/4/16 and letter, Tennant to Redmond, 17/4/16, Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms.15,229 (1).

¹⁷⁷Letter, Father Browne to his Father Provincial, 15/3/16, Jesuit Archives, Dublin.

¹⁷⁸Same to same, 15/4/16.

¹⁷⁹S. N. White, *The Terrors*, p.75. For Nugent's problems in balancing Church of Ireland and Presbyterian chaplains in his division see letter from Nugent to his wife, 7/11/15, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.3835/E/2/6/6.

¹⁸⁰Manuscript history of the U.V.F. and 36th. (Ulster) Division, by W. B. Spender, p.29, P.R.O.N.I., D.1295/2/1A-9.

G.O.C., 47th. Brigade, did, however, cause some surprise when he solemnly informed the men of the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers; "The holy saint's favourite beverage,... is well known to have been a good glass of pure, sparkling water. Moreover we have it credibly reported that he had a great aversion from Government rum."¹⁸¹

Comforts funds were also retained and extended in this period. Major General Nugent established his own comforts fund for the 36th. (Ulster) Division which, amongst other projects, purchased a cinema unit and established canteens.¹⁸² Nugent also used this fund to purchase 'Woodbine' cigarettes for his men, commenting; "Woodbines are the only cigarettes the men really care for and naturally, therefore the W.[ar] O.[ffice] give them some other kind."¹⁸³

Other ideas were also developed in this period to maintain morale. In May 1916 Major Lord Farnham formed the 36th. (Ulster) Division's follies, who were, improbably named, "The Merry Mauve Melody Makers".¹⁸⁴ However, by June, one officer felt that their performance was a "fair show only."¹⁸⁵ Major General Nugent purchased a cinema outfit, at a cost of £200, out of Divisional funds, for the 36th. (Ulster) Division, however, as he mentioned to his wife; "I had to send a committee to inspect the first lot of films as the French Comic Films might not always be good for these innocent Ulster men."¹⁸⁶ At a more mundane level, a staff officer of the 16th. (Irish) Division, noted that the Divisional baths were thoroughly enjoyed by the men.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸¹J. H. M. Staniforth, "Kitchener's Soldier", p.144, I.W.M., 67/41/1.

¹⁸²Letter, Lord Dunleath to Nugent, 6/1/16, P.R.O.N.I., MIC/571/11 and Divisional Comforts Funds accounts, P.R.O.N.I., MIC/571/9.

¹⁸³Letter, Nugent to his wife, 1/11/15, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.3835/E/2/6/5A.

¹⁸⁴Anon, "Service with the 14th. Royal Irish Rifles (Y.C.V.)", p.138, Royal Ulster Rifles' Museum.

¹⁸⁵A. A. Godson diaries, p.7, I.W.M., P.446.

¹⁸⁶Letters, Nugent to his wife, 12/11/15 and 7/12/15, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.3835/E/2/6/10A and D.3835/E/2/6/31.

¹⁸⁷Entry for 15/2/16, 16th. (Irish) Division, Adjutant General and Quarter Master General's war diary, WO95/1957.

Visits of senior officers and politicians to Irish units were intended to boost morale, although the extent to which these achieved their aims are debatable. When the then G.O.C. of Third Army visited the 16th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, his inspection degenerated into high farce. As Major General Nugent related;

I hear Gen.[eral] Allenby inspected the Pioneer battalion of my Division unexpectedly the other day while they were at work. He was not expected and only the Orderly Officer was there. When he saw Allenby coming he was so frightened that he tried to run away + fell into a barbed wire fence and there was so terrified that he could not remember what regiment he belonged to. Then Allenby got into a trench and used such language that the guide climbed out of the trench + did run away. Allenby then slipped + sat down very hard on the point of a brick and his language was such that the men took refuge in dugouts. Finally he stepped on to the roof of a dug out which was unfinished and fell through and ended his inspection by saying, 'So you're the kind of men we have got to expect from the New Armies, are you'. As a matter of fact they are very intelligent men in my Pioneers and more nearly gentlemen,... than A.[llenby] himself.¹⁸⁸

Civilian visitors appear to have been more welcome. In February 1916 Colonel Jamieson-Davis, of the I.N.V.s received a warm reception when he visited the 9th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers.¹⁸⁹ However, by far the most popular political visitor to the Irish regular units was John Redmond, M.P.. Father Henry Gill described Redmond's address to the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles in November 1915, in which the leader of the I.P.P. stated that;

¹⁸⁸Letter, Nugent to his wife, 30/11/15, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.3835/E/2/6/24A.

¹⁸⁹T. P. Dooley, *Irishmen or English Soldiers*, p.200.

He was glad to meet a regiment which contained men of every creed from different places in Ireland, especially the North. They were brothers in arms and he was sure their harmony and unity in the great cause in which they were fighting was a happy omen of the relationship which would exist between all Ireland after the war, etc.. The C.O. called for three cheers and someone said, 'and an Irish one',.... Seeing that the regiment is in a great part from the North of Ireland and containing many Protestants the reception of Mr. Redmond was very remarkable.¹⁹⁰

Redmond's visit to the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers was similarly appreciated.¹⁹¹ Redmond, himself, certainly enjoyed these occasions, thanking Field Marshal Sir John French for his kindness, he added; "I feel my visit has done good - at any rate to me."¹⁹² Press reaction was critical of Redmond's tour of the front, a cartoon in the *Daily Sketch*, showed John Redmond firing a gun, saying; "That finishes the Germans on the West Front," while *The Westminster Gazette* showed him; "After Mestrovic's statue of Marko Kraljevic, Champion of the Serbian Race,"¹⁹³ (i.e., in heroic pose, on horseback).

Political imagery also became seen as important in maintaining morale in the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions. Major General W. B. Hickie introduced a Divisional Parchment award, surmounted by a shamrock, which carried the heading, 'The Irish Brigade'.¹⁹⁴ Orange imagery, in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, was used in a much more unofficial fashion. There remains controversy over the presence of Orange

¹⁹⁰H. V. Gill, "As seen by a Chaplain", p.63, Jesuit Archives, Dublin and C. Falls, The History of the First Seven Battalions, The Royal Irish Rifles (Now the Royal Ulster Rifles) in the Great War, vol.II, Gale and Polden Ltd., Aldershot, 1925, pp.48-9.

¹⁹¹S. McCance, History of the Royal Munster Fusiliers, vol.II, p.132.

¹⁹²Letter, Redmond to French, 25/11/15, French papers, I.W.M., PP/MCR/C33/806.

¹⁹³Extracts from the *Daily Sketch* 3/12/15 and *The Westminster Gazette*, 29/11/15, Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms.7541.

¹⁹⁴A photograph of the certificate awarded to Lieutenant Colonel G. A. M. Buckley is reproduced in T. Denman, Ireland's Unknown Soldiers, p.94.

sashes on the 1st. July.¹⁹⁵ However, the division enthusiastically celebrated 'Lundy Day', the Orange festival in which an effigy of Colonel Robert Lundy, who advocated the surrender of Londonderry in 1689, is burnt in effigy.¹⁹⁶ As Second Lieutenant Young related;

the 18th. of December [1915] being lundy [sic] day it was celebrated by some Derry men and other Ulster boys,..., Two Lundys had been prepared one large and the other small some of the inhabitants suggested they were father + son the father was about 11 feet long stuffed with straw and rockets put in unexpected places with large wooded [sic] feet and wire knees head filled with gunpowder and surrounded by a large yellow trimmed admirals [sic] hat. On his chest was a large placard with 'Lundy the traitor' on it. The procession headed by torchlights and the band marched through the village playing no surrender, Derry Walls and the Boyne Water. Then Lundy was let down on a wire rope from the tree where he had been strung up and set fire to amid great cheering + booing - he was well soaked with petrole [sic] + burnt well every now + then they gave him a shake and his knees wobbled in a most realistic fashion. bombs [sic] made of jam tins were thrown into a pond just beside him, there [sic] burst and of course broke all the windows of houses round. The procession then reformed + marched up to the top of the village where Lundy junior was burnt with like ceremony.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵For a discussion of this issue see, M. Dungan, Irish Voices from the Great War, p.109.

¹⁹⁶The most concise account of Lundy's role in the siege of Londonderry is, R. F. Foster, Modern Ireland, 1600-1972, Penguin, London, 1988, pp.146-7.

¹⁹⁷The diary of Second Lieutenant G. O. L. Young, pp.67-8, P.R.O.N.I., D.3045/6/11. For a similar account see, Anon. (A.P.I.S. and D.G.S.), With the Ulster Division in France; A Story of the 11th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles (South Antrim Volunteers) from Bordon to Thiepval, William Mullan & Son, Belfast, N.D., p.34.

While this was, clearly, a well attended and popular event, apparently organised by N.C.O.s of the 10th. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, morale in this unit must have fallen when the men were told that they would have to pay for the windows broken in Gorenflos.¹⁹⁸

A final mechanism used to raise morale in this period, and the most controversial, were trench raids. Trench raids were, of course, not solely designed to raise morale, they were, more practically, used to gather intelligence on opposing forces and, arguably, to reinforce divisional control over battalions.¹⁹⁹

In the Irish units a number of units built up reputations as efficient trench raiders. Perhaps, as Denman believes, this was as trench raiding fitted in with officers pre-conceived views of Irish soldiers as 'shock troops'.²⁰⁰ Lieutenant Colonel F. P. Crozier, built up an unenviable reputation in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, due to his advocacy of trench raiding. The then Second Lieutenant Stewart-Moore noted of trench raids;

Their object was supposed to be the maintenance of an offensive spirit but so far as I could see they never achieved anything on our part of the front. Colonel Crozier who commanded the 9th. [Royal Irish] Rifles was particularly keen on sending out such patrols all to no purpose except to show off. He had the reputation of being a callous and overbearing martinet.²⁰¹

In the 16th. (Irish) Division, trench raiding was carried out with more enthusiasm. The division practised raids while in reserve²⁰² and Brigadier General

¹⁹⁸G. S. Mitchell, *Three Cheers for the Derrys!*, p.49.

¹⁹⁹The whole issue of trench raids is well covered in, T. Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System*, Macmillan, London, 1980, pp.176-203.

²⁰⁰T. Denman, "The Catholic Irish Soldier in the First World War: The 'Racial Environment'", *Irish Historical Studies*, XXVII, 108, 1991, p.356.

²⁰¹J. L. Stewart-Moore, "Random Recollections", p.26, I.W.M., p.26.

²⁰²T. Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers*, p.72.

Pereria was a particularly forceful exponent of this policy.²⁰³ Major General Sir N. Holmes, who, during the Great War served as a junior staff officer in the 47th. Brigade, commented that Pereria; “was a devil to go out with because he was always in the front-line and always when there was shelling he would go and have a look.”²⁰⁴

However, despite ‘dummy runs’, raids carried out by the 16th. (Irish) Division were often poorly organised,²⁰⁵ and led to heavy losses.²⁰⁶ As Denman concludes;

Whether the constant raiding did much harm to the Germans is debatable. Nearly all the big raids cost the 16th. Division heavy casualties, disproportionately high among junior and non-commissioned officers. Far from sharpening the fighting edge of the division it seems likely that the constant raiding blunted its effectiveness by depriving it of many outstanding leaders.²⁰⁷

Regular battalions were rarely more successful in trench raids than their New Army counterparts. One of the more successful raids launched by the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, resulted in the capture of eleven Germans, but also led to the deaths of two officers and eleven other ranks, and wounding of a further two officers and thirty seven other ranks in the battalion.²⁰⁸ A raid by the 1st. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers on the 28/29th. June 1916 led to three deaths, two officers and seven other

²⁰³ibid, p.75.

²⁰⁴Interview with Major General Sir N. Holmes, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds, Tape 430.

²⁰⁵See, for example a report by Pereria on a raid by the 7th. Battalion, Leinster Regiment on the 3/4th. June 1916, 16th. (Irish) Division General Staff, War Diary, P.R.O., WO95/1955.

²⁰⁶T. Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers*, p.72.

²⁰⁷ibid, p.76.

²⁰⁸C. Falls, *The History of the First Seven Battalions, The Royal Irish Rifles*, vol.II, p.61.

ranks wounded and thirteen other ranks missing. The raiding party did not even reach the enemy front line.²⁰⁹

Indeed, the only occasion on which an Irish unit captured a significant number of German troops during this period, apart from during major battles, was when two officers and 125 men surrendered to the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, after being bombarded with rifle grenades. As Father H. V. Gill remarked; "This success acted like a tonic on the men, who seemed to come to life again."²¹⁰

To some extent trench raids were necessary operations, to probe defences and ascertain the strength of the opposing forces. There seems to be little evidence, however, that trench raids did anything to raise morale. Equally, in terms of discipline, it is noticeable that units which actively engaged in trench raids, such as the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, often had poor disciplinary records. This would seem to confirm Denman's view that such actions deprived battalions of effective junior officers and N.C.O.s, who, in normal circumstances, had a key role in maintaining discipline.

In conclusion, the disciplinary record of Irish units on the Western Front during October 1915 to September 1916, demonstrates a great deal of variation. Broadly speaking, Irish regular battalions had come to terms with their earlier disciplinary problems, the number of men tried by courts martial decreasing drastically in this period. It is interesting to note that as losses in units increased, discipline actually appears to have improved.

The arrival of Irish New Army units in France, demonstrated many of the failings in training and officering these units, inherent in the rapid expansion of the British army in 1914, discussed in chapter 4. Major General Nugent, in particular, felt initially, that the 36th. (Ulster) Division was unfit for service. However, the replacement of inefficient officers and the executions of three men in the 107th.

²⁰⁹H. C. Wylly, *Neill's 'Blue Caps'*, vo.II, 1914-22, Gale and Polden Ltd., Aldershot, 1925, p.66.

²¹⁰Father H. V. Gill, "As seen by a Chaplain", p.98, Jesuit Archives, Dublin.

Brigade, appear to have led to improved discipline in many service battalions, in his division. While, as argued above, much of the 36th. (Ulster) Division's success on the 1st. July 1916 relied on tactical planning, remarkably few breaches of discipline occurred in a raw formation, attacking for the first time. Equally, the 16th. (Irish) Division's attack at Ginchy demonstrated that service battalions could remain as effective combat units, even after suffering heavy losses.

Comparisons between Irish and non-Irish units suggest that the number of men tried by courts martial in Irish units was, generally, higher than that in their counterparts from Great Britain. However, it is worth stressing that each British, as well as Irish, or for that matter, Australian, unit, appears to have had its own unique courts martial profile.

The reaction of Irish units to the Easter Rising varied greatly. However an assessment of courts martial trials for this period simply confirms what historians have long believed. Namely, that no acts of indiscipline occurred in the Irish Regiments as a result of the Rising.

Finally, it is apparent that the military authorities, by this stage of the war, were supporting a wide range of morale boosting activities, including divisional sports, concert troupes and cinemas, which, collectively, appear to have fulfilled their tasks well.

Chapter 6.**“Amalgamation, Reduction and Conscription”, Irish units on the Western Front, October 1916 to February 1918.**

The period October 1916 to February 1918 is a crucial one for understanding the development of discipline and morale in the Irish units of the B.E.F.. The aftermath of the Battle of the Somme left both the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions seriously understrength, at the very time that voluntary recruiting in Ireland had all but ceased. This resulted in the disbandment and amalgamation of many Irish units, a process which meant that, by February 1918, both the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions were mainly composed of regular Irish battalions. Conscription, of course, did not apply to Ireland; however, a number of Irish battalions did receive drafts of English conscripts and, in assessing discipline and morale, it is important to assess the impact of this change of personnel. Also, Irish units stationed in Ireland were moved to Great Britain in late 1917, suggesting that the military authorities were suspicious of Sinn Fein infiltration into Irish regiments.

In broader terms 1917 was very much, a crisis year, for many European armies. The Italian army collapsed at Caporetto, the Russian army dissolved in the revolution, the French experienced serious mutinies, the Austro-Hungarian army faced growing ethnic tensions and, recent research suggests, even the German army faced serious disciplinary problems. Out of this picture of a general crisis of morale, only the B.E.F. emerged immune from collapse.

By October 1916 it was abundantly clear to both senior officers and leading politicians that Irish recruiting was at a standstill.¹ In late September 1916 the Adjutant General, Sir Neville Macready, stated that the Irish infantry units were

¹ “Minutes of the Proceedings of, and Precis Prepared for, the Army Council for the Years 1915 and 1916”, P.R.O., WO163/21, pp.23-4.

17,194 men below strength. He offered five solutions to this problem, namely, the introduction of conscription in Ireland, amalgamating the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions, reinforcing Irish units with English conscripts, allowing the divisions to waste away or, transferring Irish units from non Irish to Irish formations.² The Army Council opted for the second of these options, the amalgamation of the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions.³

However, the Army Council realised the political sensitivity of such a move and felt that the final decision, regarding the fate of the Irish divisions, should be made by the War Cabinet.⁴ David Lloyd George wrote, quite bluntly, to John Redmond;

The state of the two Irish Divisions in France - the 16th. and 36th. - has been giving a good deal of anxiety lately. The 16th. Division in particular is now little stronger than one Brigade, and the Ulster Division is hardly up to two-thirds of its war establishment,..., I propose to amalgamate the two Divisions into one.⁵

Both Carson and Redmond, were eager to retain their own "private armies" on the Western Front, even when their political prestige had fallen to depths where they could no longer provide men for them. This meant that this decision was politically unacceptable. After some discussion, Redmond came to the conclusion that the amalgamation was unnecessary as;

if a Dublin Brigade could be established, we would have little difficulty in obtaining the necessary recruits to keep it up to its strength,..., My idea is,

²ibid, p.55.

³N. Perry, "Nationality in the Irish Infantry Regiments in the First World War", *War and Society*, 12, 1, 1994, p.81.

⁴"Minutes of the Proceedings of, and Precis Prepared for, the Army Council for the Years 1915 and 1916", P.R.O., WO163/21, p.26.

⁵Letter, David Lloyd George to John Redmond, 29/9/16, Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms.15,189.

that the two Dublin battalions, I think the 7th. and the 8th. [actually the 8th. and 9th.], that are in the 16th. Division already should have associated with them the 10th. Dublins, which was sent to the Naval Division, and also the 2nd. Dublins. In this way, a Dublin Brigade could be created. I am sure that this creation would arouse a great deal of interest and satisfaction in Dublin City.⁶

Meanwhile, Carson favoured amalgamation, but proposed that the 36th. (Ulster) Division should merge with the 51st. (Highland) Division, rather than the 16th. (Irish) Division.⁷ Significantly, Major General Oliver Nugent, himself an Ulster Unionist, felt that;

If however the question of amalgamation becomes imperative, I hope the 16th. and 36th. will be amalgamated so that there may be at least one Irish Division.

I am sure that this will be the view of Officers and men of both Divisions and I have written to Carson to tell him so.⁸

Of course, the Army Council's decision had not been an inspired one. The amalgamation of the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions would have simply created a formation which, after another two to three months service, would again have proved unviable. However, political interference did nothing to provide a solution. The rather bizarre compromise reached was that men recruited in Ireland would be sent to Irish regular battalions, while English drafts would be used to

⁶Letter, John Redmond to General Sir Neville Macready, 31/10/16, Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms.15,205/2.

⁷Letter, Major General Sir Oliver Nugent to [Macready?], 6/10/16, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.1507/A/19/16.

⁸ibid.

maintain Irish service battalions.⁹ This, in itself, threatened both the regimental system and the national identity of Irish units, both of which Nicholas Perry believes were important in maintaining Irish troop morale in 1917 and 1918.¹⁰

The political compromises over the reinforcement of the Irish units also caused some difficulties for the Adjutant General's office. Army Council Order 1246 of 1916 meant that any man, conscripted in Great Britain, who was of "Irish nationality" was, if he expressed the desire to join an Irish regiment, to be sent to the depot of the regiment he requested.¹¹ This imprecise phraseology meant that this system was open to abuse. Redmond took up the case of a Private, J. Barret, conscripted into the 3rd. Battalion, East Lancashire Regiment, who stated that his request to join an Irish unit had been ignored. After making enquiries, the Adjutant General stated;

Steps have been taken to transfer him to an Irish unit. It looks to me like one of those cases in which a man does not take advantage of the privileges at his disposal and gives us all a great deal of trouble through his own carelessness and neglect.

If this turns out to be the case, I hope you will vent your displeasure on him.¹²

Conceivably, almost every man conscripted in Great Britain, with a vaguely Irish sounding name, or Irish relations, could have requested a transfer to an Irish unit under this regulation. This would seriously have disrupted the dispatch of replacements to France.

⁹N. Perry, "Nationality in the Irish Infantry Regiments", pp.82-3, letter Macready to Redmond, Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms.15,205/2 and entry for the 26/10/16 in Adjutant General's war diary, P.R.O., WO95/26.

¹⁰N. Perry, "Maintaining Regimental Identity in the Great War: The Case of the Irish Infantry Regiments", *Stand To*, 52, 1998, p.8.

¹¹Letter, Redmond to Macready, 26/10/16, Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms.15,205/2.

¹²Letter, Macready to Redmond, 15/11/16, Redmond papers, N.L.I., Ms.15,205/2.

The impact of absorbing English drafts and conscripts, on discipline and morale in the Irish regiments, appears to have varied considerably. In October 1917, the 1st. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, rather incredulously, received a large draft from, of all units, the Army Pay Corps, who had only been afforded rudimentary training; “but they were not as bad as all that, for they looked pretty good physically and, when, after Paschendale [sic.], we were able to knock them into shape, they became really good fighting men.”¹³ Indeed, this draft was found to be much more intelligent and thus, quicker to learn, than the average soldier and, significantly, it was discovered that these men had all voluntarily enlisted in 1914.¹⁴

Conscripts generally appear to have received a less enthusiastic welcome. Like most English officers, those serving in Irish battalions mainly viewed conscripts with suspicion.¹⁵ For example, Sir Barclay Nihill, emphasising the volunteer nature of his old battalion, stated;

My Division was the 16th, Irish and my regiment the 1st. Battalion The Royal Munster Fusiliers, recruited largely from the counties of Cork and Kerry. We were a professional unit of the pre-war regular army,...., although by March 1918 most of the officers and men were in for the duration of the war only. Except for a handful of Tyneside Irish who joined us early in 1918, there was not a conscript among us.¹⁶

¹³J. E. Nelson, “Irish Soldiers in the Great War, Some Personal Experiences”, *The Irish Sword*, XI, 1974, p.173.

¹⁴ibid, pp.173-4.

¹⁵I. Beckett, “The Real Unknown Army: British Conscripts, 1916 -19”, in J. J. Becker and S. Audoin-Rouzeau, (eds.), *Les Societies Europeenes et la Guerre de 1914-18*, *Universite de Paris X, Nanterre*, Paris, 1990, pp.340-1.

¹⁶Sir Barclay Nihill, “Turning Point 1918”, *The Tablet*, 30/3/68, p.1. Copy of manuscript version in Lieutenant Colonel Holt’s papers, N.A.M. 7603-69-2. Nihill was a Captain in the 1st. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers.

Conscripts, or even suspected conscripts received poor treatment when joining Irish units. A draft of English conscripts to the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles appears to have been dubbed the “Gawd blimy brigade”.¹⁷ Edward Bowyer-Green, drafted into the 15th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, from the 25th. Battalion, London Regiment, received an even less effusive welcome. As he noted; “We were the pariahs you see, although we were helping their battalion we weren’t one of them, they made out we were conscripts but we weren’t, we were volunteers, territorials.”¹⁸

Other Irish soldiers felt that the policy of drafting Englishmen to Irish battalions had all but destroyed the regimental system. When Captain W. T. Colyer rejoined the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, from a school of instruction, in April 1917, he noted;

when I got there, what a change! In the first flush of disappointment I felt as if I might just as well have been sent to the 8th. Battalion, not to mention the 18th. Manchesters or the 118th. Cheshires! There was a new C.O., Colonel Jeffries, also a new Adjutant, Captain Mallory-Scott, and two-thirds of the other officers I had never met before. As for the rank-and-file, not only did nearly all their faces seem to be new, but about half of them made no pretence of having come from Ireland at all. Two large drafts of Londoners had been sent to the battalion; and, Londoner as I was myself, I resented their intrusion as keenly as if I had been born and bred on the banks of the Liffey.¹⁹

¹⁷Anon., “Service with the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, (Y.C.V.), 1914-18 War”, p.253, unpublished manuscript, Royal Ulster Rifles Museum.

¹⁸Interview with Edward Bowyer-Green, I.W.M., Sound Archive, 9547/1.

¹⁹W. T. Colyer, “War Impressions of a Temporary Soldier”, unpublished manuscript, unpaginated, I.W.M., 76/51/1.

Nevertheless, some Irish officers did have a more positive view of English drafts. Lieutenant Colonel G. A. M. Buckley, C.O. of the 7th. Battalion, Leinster Regiment, was even complimentary about conscripts;

I got a draft of 109 from the Shropshire L.[ight] Inf.[antry] during the show. [Third Battle of Ypres]. They were conscripts - mere boys of 19 - never seen a shot fired. I hated taking them straight into a fiery furnace like we've been through but I had no alternative. They behaved splendidly our fellows were very pleased with them but after the way of new drafts they were unfortunate and suffered heavily.²⁰

Equally, the ever pragmatic Nugent stated in September 1916; "We can't get Irishmen so we must have others and personally I don't care tuppence who they are as long as they make us up."²¹ Nugent must have been reflecting the views of many officers, that it was better to hold a trench with a company, nearing full establishment, than with one which, if more ethnically pure, was not an effective fighting unit.

Ironically, the use of English drafts to maintain Irish battalions proved to be unviable. By February 1917 the Army Council believed that the strength of the B.E.F. could not be maintained at its current level.²² In this situation amalgamations and the disbandment of some Irish battalions to provide drafts for others became increasingly necessary. Indeed, as early as May 1916 the 9th. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers had been disbanded and its men sent to the other three battalions of the regiments serving on the Western Front.²³

²⁰Letter, Lieutenant Colonel G. A. M. Buckley to Lieutenant General Sir Lawrence Parsons, 15/8/17, Parsons's papers, N.L.I., Ms.21,278.

²¹Letter, Nugent to his wife, 21/9/16, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., cited, N. Perry, "Maintaining Regimental Identity", p.7.

²²F. W. Perry, The Commonwealth armies: Manpower and organisation in two world wars, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1988, p.24.

²³E. A. James, British Regiments, 1914-18, Samson Books, London, 1978, p.110. This book gives a detailed summary of the amalgamations and disbandments in the

While the issue of the reduction of Irish battalions in the October 1916 to February 1918 period has already been well researched by Nicholas Perry,²⁴ it is vital to examine these reductions with regard to discipline and morale.

Of course Irish service battalions were not the only elements of the B.E.F. to face amalgamation in this period. January 1918 saw the introduction of the nine battalion infantry division, which cut the infantry strength of all British divisions by almost one quarter.²⁵ However, in the B.E.F. as a whole, these disbandments were carried out in a logical fashion. As Ian Beckett notes; "in 1916 and in 1918 second line territorials in particular took the brunt of the reductions consequent upon the reorganisation of the expeditionary force."²⁶

At the regimental level, this meant that, for example, the 1/8th. Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment, the most junior territorial battalion of the regiment serving on the Western Front was disbanded in early 1918, most of its personnel were drafted to the 1/6th. Battalion of the regiment. Likewise, when the 2/7th. Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment was disbanded in June 1918, men serving in it were given the option of transferring to the 1/7th. Battalion.²⁷

By contrast, many of the disbandments and amalgamations of Irish service battalions appear totally illogical. In the Royal Irish Rifles, for example, the most senior service battalion in France, the 7th. was disbanded in November 1917, while the most junior battalion of the regiment on active service, the 16th. survived until the end of the war. There are similar anomalies in other Irish regiments, for example, the 10th.

Irish regiments, 1916-18.

²⁴N. Perry, "Nationality in the Irish Infantry Regiments" and "Maintaining Regimental Identity".

²⁵F. W. Perry, *The Commonwealth Armies*, p.28.

²⁶I. F. W. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558-1945*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991, p.233.

²⁷P. Morris, "Leeds and the Amateur Military Tradition: The Leeds Rifles and their Antecedents, c.1859-1918", unpublished Ph.D., University of Leeds, 1983, pp.960 and 999.

Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, disbanded in February 1918, outlived the 8th. and 9th. Battalions of the regiment, amalgamated in November 1917.

Of course, some very localised political and regional concerns influenced the choice of units to be disbanded. Major General Oliver Nugent, explaining the rationale for reductions in the 36th. (Ulster) Division in February 1918, stated;

The Division now consists of 5 Regular North Irish battalions and of 5 battalions of the original Division.

As General Officer Commanding the Division, I had the most unpleasant duty of selecting 2 battalions of Inniskilling Fusiliers and 4 battalions of Royal Irish Rifles for disbandment.

I decided that the battalions to remain in the Division should be those which were composed of the men who first came forward to form the Ulster Division.

I therefore selected the senior of the three battalions of Inniskilling Fusiliers to remain.

In the case of the Royal Irish Rifles, I selected the senior battalion to remain. This was the 15th. Battalion, a Belfast Battalion, originally raised as the 7th. Battalion.

The next senior of the original battalions of the Ulster Division would have been the 10th. Royal Irish Rifles.

This was also a Belfast Battalion and I decided that it would be unfair to the Counties of Down and Antrim that they should have no representation amongst the original units of the Division. I therefore selected the 12th. Royal Irish Rifles as the other battalion to remain.

The remaining third battalion of Royal Irish Rifles is the 16th. Royal Irish Rifles, the Pioneer Battalion, which was not affected by the reorganisation of the Division.²⁸

This explanation, to the Lord Mayor of Belfast, does shed some light on the decisions taken on disbanding specific units. However, Nugent, doubtlessly aware that this letter would be publicly circulated,²⁹ did not reveal all of the considerations behind his decision. While Nugent had informed Belfast's leading citizen that he regretted that the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, a Belfast raised unit, which Johnston had been eager to save, had been disbanded,³⁰ the truth was rather different. In December 1917, Nugent, writing confidentially to the Adjutant General, stated,

The 14th. Royal Irish Rifles now in the 109th. Brigade, to be broken up and used to make up casualties in the Royal Irish Rifles battalions in the Division.

This battalion should in my opinion be broken up in any case.

About a year ago, I reported them as totally wanting in military spirit and asked for a C.O. and a large draft of Englishmen to try and create a fighting spirit in them. You gave me both, and while Cheape was in command they certainly improved, but since he left they have been tired and found wanting. It is significant that their present C.O. told me two days ago that most of the English draft sent to them a year ago have become casualties.

The Brigadier says he cannot trust them and I know that he is right.

²⁸Letter, Nugent to James Johnston, Lord Mayor of Belfast, 28/2/18, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., MIC/571/10.

²⁹Indeed, there is a copy of this correspondence in the papers of Lieutenant A. N. Anderson, 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, P.R.O.N.I., D.961/8. This suggests that some officers expected political pressure to prevent the disbandment of their battalions.

³⁰Letter, Nugent to Johnston, 28/2/18, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., MIC/571/10.

They are poor stuff, either as workers or fighters and have been a constant source of anxiety during the past three weeks.³¹

Nugent's comments in this letter suggest that, in addition to local interests, disciplinary records and combat effectiveness also determined a battalion's fate. Nicholas Perry, mentioning the circumstances behind the disbandment of the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, noted that its number of English drafts was not disproportionate to that in other battalions in the 36th. (Ulster) Division and that Nugent had written this letter in a fit of temper.³² The disciplinary record of the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles (see graph 6.3) appears to be a very good one, and this, to some extent, bears out Perry's views.

However, there is strong evidence to suggest that both discipline and combat effectiveness were considerably worse than these statistics suggest. At Langemarck in August 1917 the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles appear to have retreated precipitately, when facing German machine gun fire.³³ Equally, as examined in the previous chapter, this battalion had suffered from a number of problems, mainly inefficient officers, during the December 1915 to September 1916 period and there is little to suggest that there was any marked improvement during most of late 1916 and 1917. Indeed, J. MacRoberts noted that, following the Somme, tensions between officers and other ranks increased in the battalion, as veterans did not enjoy being commanded; "by those new officers whose experience of warfare had been obtained at Newcastle in Ireland."³⁴

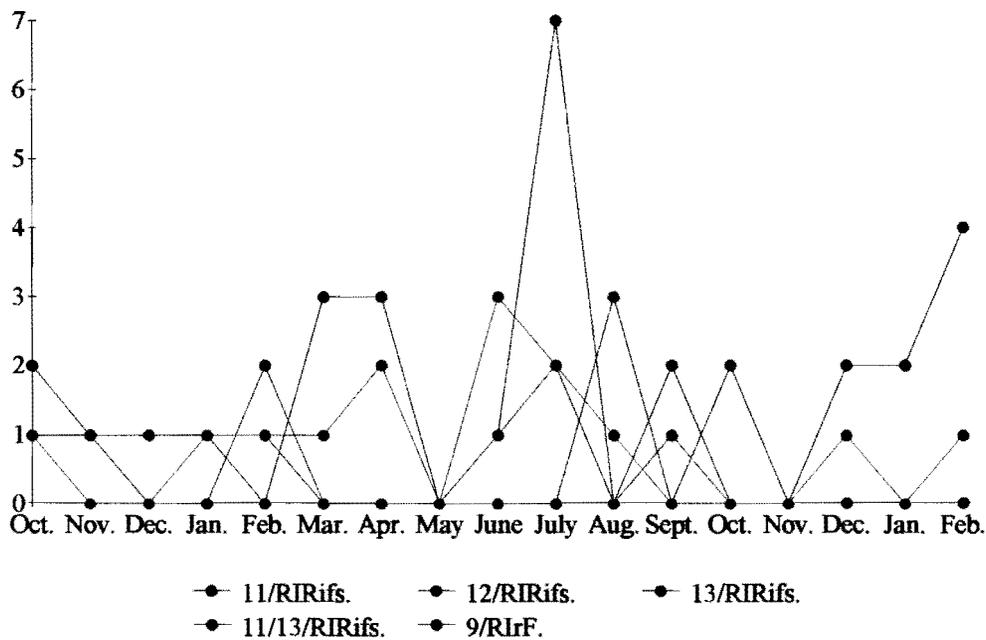
³¹Letter, Nugent to the Adjutant General, 11/12/17, Farren Connell papers, P.R.O.N.I., MIC/571/10.

³²N. Perry, "Maintaining Regimental Identity", p.10. Curiously, Perry does not mention the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles by name, although it is quite clear that this is the unit he is referring to.

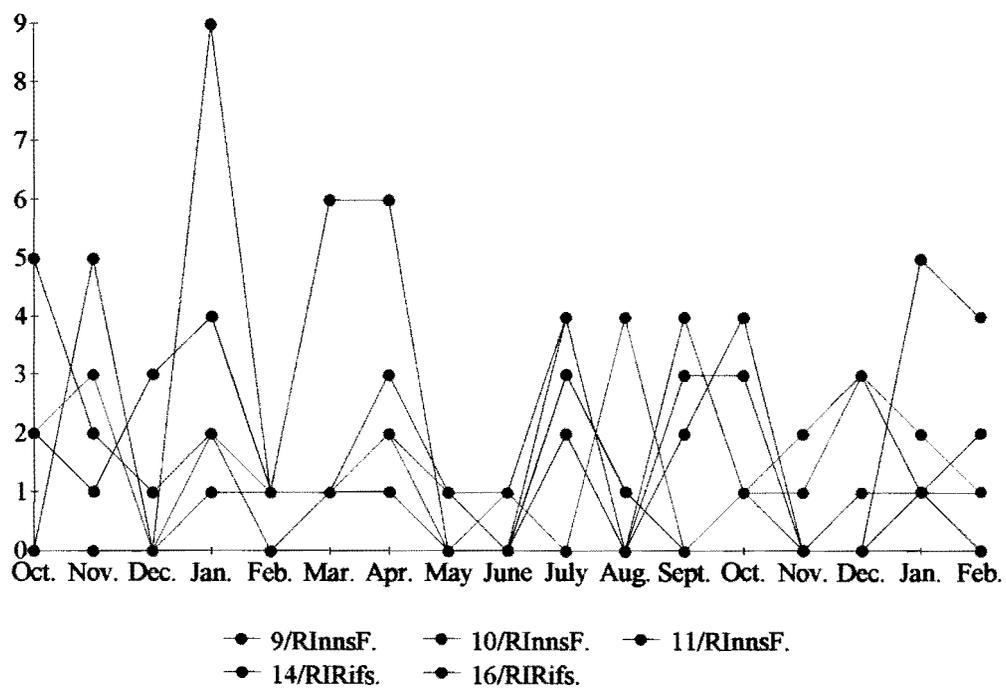
³³C. Falls, *The History of the 36th. (Ulster) Division*, Constable, London, 1996, pp.117-8.

³⁴J. MacRoberts papers, p.204, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds.

Graph 6.2. Men tried by courts martial while serving in the 108th. Brigade, 36th. (Ulster) Division, October 1916 to February 1918.



Graph 6.3. Men tried by courts martial while serving in the 109th. Brigade, 36th. (Ulster) Division, (including men of the pioneer battalion, 16th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles). October 1916 to February 1918.



In terms of the 16th. (Irish) Division, we can be less sure about the reasons for the disbandments of some units. Indeed, some of the measures taken to reinforce this division appear incredibly bizarre. For example, when the decision was taken to utilise the South Irish Horse as infantrymen, instead of being incorporated into existing units, they were formed into the 7th. (South Irish Horse) Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment. This unit survived until the end of the war, while the, technically, more senior 6th. Battalion was disbanded in February 1918.

Unlike in the case of the 36th. (Ulster) Division, disbandments in the 16th. (Irish) Division appear to have taken little account of local sensibilities. Of the four provinces of Ireland, only two were represented by service battalions in the 16th. (Irish) Division by the end of February 1918. It is perhaps a comment on the perceived decline of the I.P.P. that this state of affairs had been reached and that, despite John Redmond's proposal to form a Dublin Brigade, no Royal Dublin Fusiliers' service battalion, serving in the 16th. (Irish) Division, survived beyond February 1918. The latter is even more surprising, given that Dublin was one of the very few areas in Ireland which had provided anything resembling a satisfactory number of recruits.

In terms of discipline, it would appear that the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles and the 9th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, were both disbanded due, at least partly, to disciplinary problems. In March 1917 Major General W. B. Hickie noted that the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles had been unable to retaliate effectively against a German trench raiding party, although he did add that on the 8th. March 1917 the battalion had a trench strength of just 22 officers and 318 other ranks.³⁶ It is noticeable (from graph 6.4), that the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles had the highest number of courts martial in the 47th. Brigade in May, June and July 1917 and, indeed,

³⁶Report by Hickie to IV Corps relating to enemy raids, 16th. Divisional Front, 8/9 March 1917, dated 10/3/17, war diary of 16th. Divisional general Staff, P.R.O., WO95/1955.

one of the worst disciplinary records of any service battalion in the 16th. (Irish) Division (see graphs 6.5 and 6.6 overleaf).

Meanwhile, Captain O. L. Beater noted, in November 1916; “the [7th. Battalion] Royal Irish Rifles, from whom we are taking over had left the dugout, and in fact everything else in a rotten state. They have not got a very good reputation for keeping trenches in good repair, in fact I consider them a dashed lazy lot.”³⁷ In January 1917 Beater, when relieving the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles in the trenches, found one of their Majors; “gloriously drunk, quite incoherent, and almost incapable of movement.”³⁸

There may also have been a more obvious political influence on discipline which led to the disbandment of the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles. Major Denys Reitz, who was posted to the battalion in August 1917, stated;

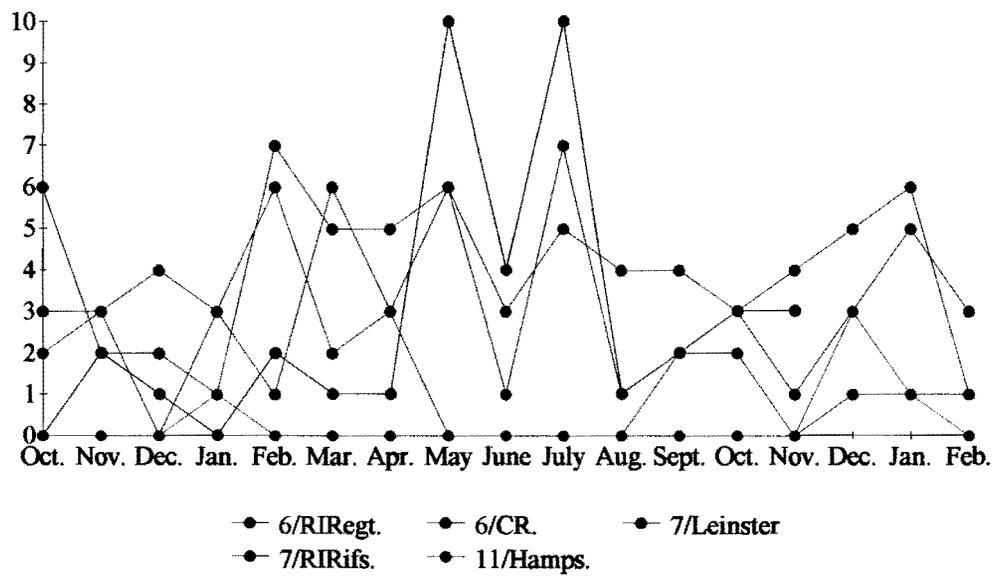
I do not know whether it was one more ramification of Irish politics, but Colonel Francis was transferred to the command of a brigade, and the 7th. [Royal] Irish Rifles were broken up. I heard it said that there were too many Sinn Feiners among us. The men certainly talked a lot of politics, and even my friend Freeney [Reitz’s batman] waxed hot on occasion, but, coming as I did from a country [South Africa] where everyone talks politics, I paid little attention to their frequent wranglings. Whatever the cause, we were disbanded.³⁹

³⁷Entry for 26/11/16, Captain O. L. Beater’s diaries, I.W.M., 86/65/1.

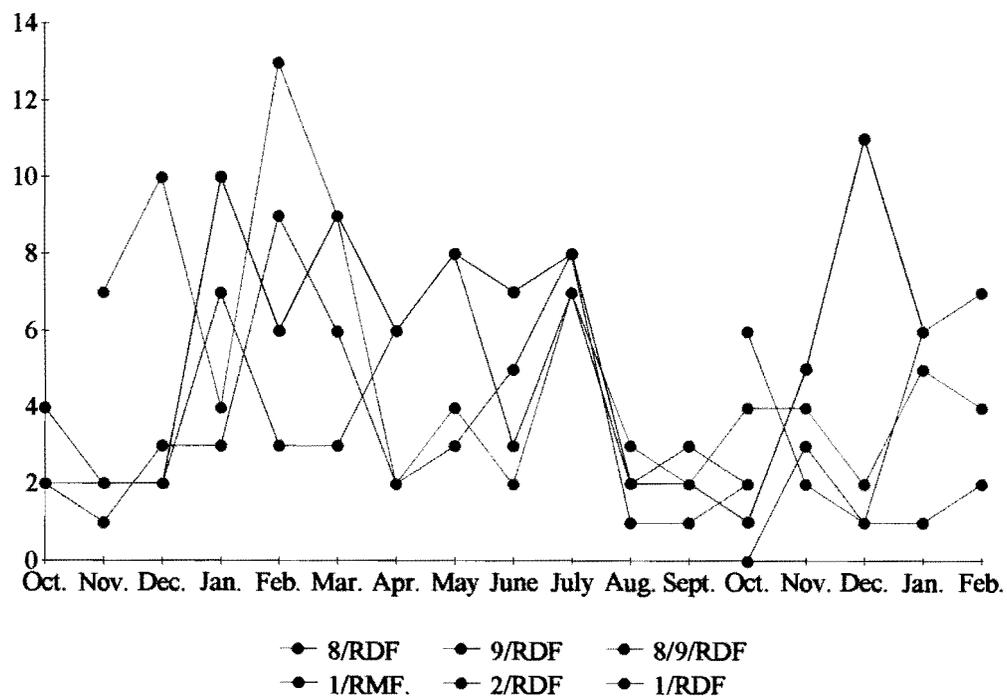
³⁸Entry for 20/1/17, *ibid.*

³⁹D. Reitz, *Trekking On*, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1933, pp.184-5.

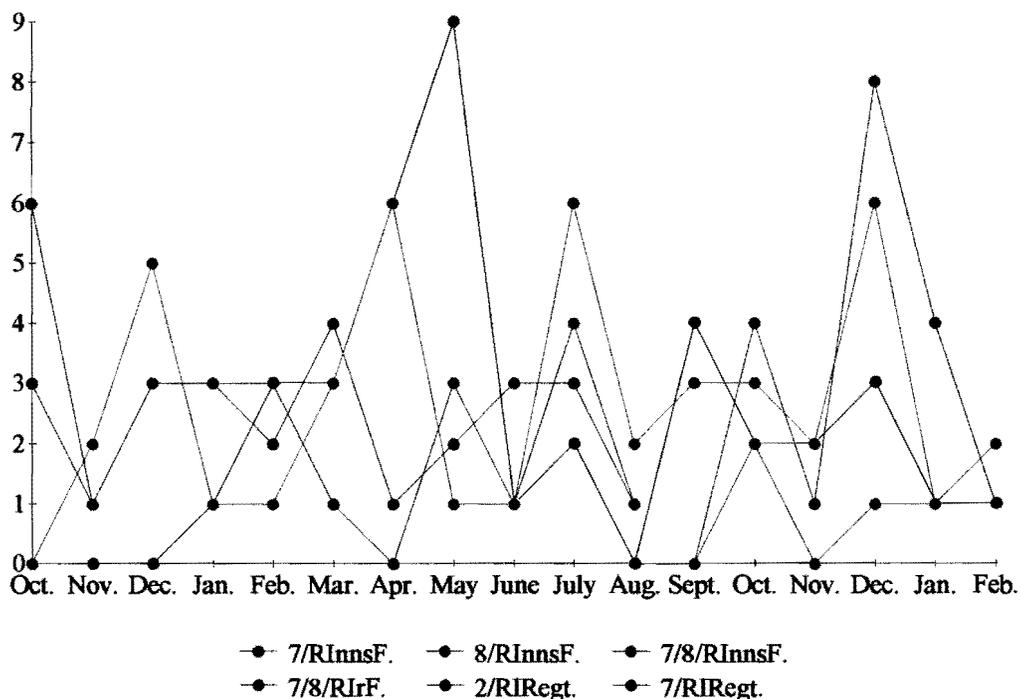
Graph 6.4. Men tried by courts martial while serving in the 47th Brigade, 16th (Irish) Division, (including the divisional pioneer battalion, 11th Battalion, Hampshire Regiment), October 1916 to February 1918.



Graph 6.5. Men tried by courts martial while serving in the 48th Brigade, 16th (Irish) Division, October 1916 to February 1918.



Graph 6.6. Men tried by courts martial while serving in the 49th. Brigade, 16th. (Irish) Division, October 1916 to February 1918.



Graph 6.4, demonstrates that the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles had a relatively small number of courts martial in August to November 1917. However, this is somewhat misleading; while during this period only eight men of the battalion were tried by courts martial, five were tried for desertion, four of whom were found guilty.⁴⁰

In addition to this, the fate of the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles itself does something to bear out Reitz's comments. When the unit was disbanded, its men were drafted to battalions of the Royal Irish Rifles, serving in the 36th. (Ulster) Division, which would probably have been viewed as more loyal than the 16th. (Irish) Division, with regard to possible Sinn Fein infiltration.

There is also some evidence to suggest that the 9th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers faced amalgamation due to disciplinary problems. Captain O. L. Beater noted

⁴⁰For further details please see appendix 6.

a catalogue of failings of the officers in his battalion. One of his main complaints was about officers and N.C.O.s in the 9th. Battalion. In November 1916 he noted;

We have a terrible pair of junior subs in this company, to wit Howe and Brown, who are forever speculating on their chances of being done in by a Trench Mortar, asphyxiated by gas shells, or done to death while on their way home to their dugout, by some brutal sniper. They are invariably late for breakfast, and incidentally for parade. They are nearly always bemoaning their fate, and bewailing the fact of ever having joined the army.⁴¹

Later in November, Beater suggested that Captain Long of "A" Company had "lost his nerve" and faked illness to be sent home.⁴² He was even more condemnatory of Captain Green, who, in January 1917 was recovering at a rest camp following a breakdown, stating; "Green is a most accomplished lead-swinger and manages to work these little stunts to perfection."⁴³ The situation had further deteriorated by February 1917, when Beater noted; "Captain Shine who is acting C.O. during the temporary absence of Colonel Thackerary is laid up in bed: unkind people say it is the over indulgence in John Jameson [whiskey] which has laid him low."⁴⁴

In terms of N.C.O.s the 9th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers also had serious problems. In March 1917 their R.S.M. was reduced to corporal and transferred to the 8th. Battalion, for drunkenness.⁴⁵ Likewise, in September 1917, Acting R.S.M. McCullagh was reduced to sergeant for being absent and breaking out of camp.⁴⁶

⁴¹Captain O. L. Beater diary, I.W.M., 86/65/1, entry for 4/11/16.

⁴²ibid, 14/11/16.

⁴³ibid, 19/1/17.

⁴⁴ibid, 9/2/17.

⁴⁵ibid, 9/2/17. I have found no mention of this case in the courts martial registers. However, under certain circumstances a C.O. could reduce an N.C.O. without reference to a court martial, War Office, Manual of Military Law, H.M.S.O., London, 1914, pp.32-3.

⁴⁶See appendix 6 for further details.

Also, in September 1917, Hon. Lieutenant and Quartermaster J. Merry was found guilty of an offence under section 40 of the Army Act and received a reprimand and forfeiture of seniority.⁴⁷ The fact that two key members of the battalion were convicted by courts martial in July 1917, suggests that it is no coincidence that this battalion was disbanded in October 1917, while the more junior 10th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers was not disbanded until February 1918.

However, disciplinary records were by no means solely responsible for deciding which units should be amalgamated or disbanded. The 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, for example, had a relatively poor disciplinary record over this period (see graph 6.4), yet survived until August 1918. This is particularly surprising when we consider that the battalion experienced two mutinies, of a sort, during this period and that there was a serious personality clash between the C.O. and second in command.

The two mutinies in this unit are really of a very minor nature. Captain C. A. Brett recalled that, at some point in the Winter of 1916/17 there; “was a near mutiny in the Battalion when one day we had served up to us boiled chestnuts instead of potatoes, which naturally evoked so much furious protest from an Irish Regiment that the powers that be never again (in my experience) tried it on.”⁴⁸ The second mutiny occurred in November 1916 and was, in essence an officers’ protest. When Lieutenant Colonel Rowland Feilding ordered the arrest of Captain Lambert, on a charge of drunkenness, most of the other officers in the battalion joined Lambert in his room and removed their Sam Browne belts (the removal of this article of equipment denoted that an officer was under open arrest).⁴⁹

What exactly this officers’ mutiny was about is unclear. In September 1916 Feilding⁵⁰ had taken over command of the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers

⁴⁷ibid.

⁴⁸C. A. Brett, “Recollections”, p.15, N.A.M., 7608-40.

⁴⁹Interview with Colonel F. W. S. Jourdain, I.W.M., Sound Archives, 11214/4.

⁵⁰While there are no adverse comments about Feilding in his personal file, his wartime career was highly unusual. Originally an officer in the Lancashire Fusiliers, Feilding

following the death of its popular C.O., Lieutenant Colonel John Lenox-Conyngham at the Battle of Guillemont. As a Coldstream Guards officer, Feilding was something of an outsider, which made it doubly difficult for him to replace Lenox-Conyngham. Feilding, receiving a promoted sergeant of the Coldstream Guards as a second-lieutenant shortly after the Battle of Ginchy, appointed him Adjutant and set him to teaching the officers of the battalion how to salute properly.⁵¹ This latter measure would appear to account for the protest.

This situation was exacerbated in March 1917 when Major H. F. N. Jourdain, who had actually been the C.O. of the 5th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers and commanded, temporarily, a brigade of the 10th. (Irish) Division, became acting C.O. of the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers while Feilding was on leave. Jourdain was far from pleased with his new command, following an inspection on the 13th. March he noted;

The men were very young indeed, and were disgracefully dressed and equipped, their clothes were worn out and dirty beyond words, and their bearing was good, but they were too inexperienced. The officers were good as far as I could see but the Battalion was not at all fit for service in an offensive. I was much depressed by the knocked about appearance of all ranks. What a change from my 5th. Battalion at Salonika!

The shirts worn by the men were almost black, and their caps and putties were long worn out.

transferred to the City of London Rough Riders with the rank of Temporary Major on the 29/11/13. However, on the 30/3/15, following personal intervention by the O.C., Coldstream Guards, he transferred to that regiment. His subsequent transfer to the Connaught Rangers and Post Office Rifles does seem strange given the efforts involved to secure his services for the Coldstream Guards. (All details from, P.R.O., WO339/48941).

⁵¹Interview with Colonel F. W. S. Jourdain, I.W.M., Sound Archives, 11214/4.

I saw nearly all the men, but was not struck with the demeanour of the N.C.O.s and men.⁵²

Three days later, Jourdain applied for some cavalry recruits; “to stiffen up the Batt.[allion]”,⁵³ and, by the 22nd. March 1917 he stated that Major General Hickie believed that there had been; “a tremendous improvement in the Battalion.”⁵⁴

There does appear to be some truth in Jourdain’s comments; however, we should be aware that Jourdain was trying to replace Feilding as the C.O. of the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers and was, possibly, painting a rather too negative picture of the discipline in the battalion. Jourdain noted that Feilding’s return from leave saw the return of; “the unsatisfactory state of affairs.”⁵⁵

When Feilding was C. O. and Jourdain his second in command, the situation became unbearable. Jourdain appears to have turned most of the officers against Feilding, while Feilding mobilised the N.C.O.s against Jourdain.⁵⁶ By the 23rd. April 1917 Jourdain had applied to transfer and was given a staff post in the 47th. Brigade.⁵⁷

The rights and wrongs of this dispute are difficult to assess. Jourdain, an officer in the Connaught Rangers of twenty four years standing, had some justification in thinking that he should replace a Coldstream Guards officer as C.O. of the battalion. Equally, Jourdain appears to have uncovered some irregularities in the battalion accounts.⁵⁸

Feilding, whose selection of a commissioned Coldstream Guards sergeant as adjutant, was tactless, nevertheless appears to have become a popular C.O.. Captain C. A. Brett noted; “Colonel Feilding - Snowball he was known by the men (he was

⁵²Entry for 13/3/17, diaries of Colonel H. F. N. Jourdain, N.A.M. 5603-12-1.

⁵³Entry for 16/3/17, *ibid.*

⁵⁴Entry for 22/3/17, *ibid.*

⁵⁵Entry for 21/4/17, *ibid.*

⁵⁶Entry for 22/4/17, *ibid.*

⁵⁷Entries for 23/4/17 and 24/4/17, *ibid.*

⁵⁸Entry for 23/4/17, *ibid.*

about 40 but his hair was quite white) was always at hand in any difficult or dangerous situation.”⁵⁹ Even the then Second Lieutenant F. W. S. Jourdain (Colonel H. F. N. Jourdain’s nephew) seems to have approved of Feilding, although he did, waspishly, suggest that Feilding had been sent to the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers simply because he was a Roman Catholic.⁶⁰

Jourdain, presumably was not seen as a particularly effective C.O.. In August 1914 he was a Major and, in a war in which promotion was unusually fast, he had only reached the rank of Lieutenant Colonel by November 1918. Also, Captain C. A. Brett, who served in the 3rd. Battalion, Connaught Rangers in 1917, stated; “Our Colonel was then Colonel Jourdain, a Regular, who had been second in command of the 6th. Battalion in France while I was there. I knew him well and we got on well together, he was a good and just man but not a great Commanding Officer.”⁶¹ Nevertheless, the Jourdain/Feilding rivalry appears to have had a serious impact on the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers and therefore, it is difficult to explain why this battalion survived the February 1918 disbandments, while the, apparently more deserving, at least in terms of discipline, 7th. Battalion, Leinster Regiment was broken up.

Amalgamations of service battalions appear to have had very little impact on morale in the units concerned. Second Lieutenant T. H. Witherow showed no resentment at the creation of the 8/9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles,⁶² while Captain E. A. Godson’s only complaint regarding the transfer of men of the North Irish Horse into the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers was that, with eleven new officers, some of them senior captains, joining the battalion, his chances of becoming adjutant were very small.⁶³ Perhaps many officers and men shared the sentiments of the historian of the Leinster Regiment, who noted;

⁵⁹C. A. Brett, “Recollections”, p.24, N.A.M., 7608-40.

⁶⁰Interview with Colonel F. W. S. Jourdain, I.W.M., Sound Archives, 11214/3.

⁶¹Captain C. A. Brett, unpublished “Recollections”, I.W.M., 7608-40, p.36.

⁶²T. H. Witherow, “Personal Recollections of the Great War”, p.21.

⁶³E. A. Godson, unpublished diaries, I.W.M., P.446, p.10.

The failure of recruiting in Ireland had rendered it impossible to maintain all the Irish battalions at full strength, and very wisely the authorities decided so far as possible to amalgamate existing Irish formations instead of endeavouring to keep them all alive by watering them down with alien stock,..., This system of allowing the Regular Irish battalions to absorb their Service ones had the outstanding merit that nationality and regimental *esprit de corps* were preserved.⁶⁴

This is, perhaps, to over state the case. While amalgamations seem, largely, to have been viewed as necessary measures, the actual disbandment of units was unpopular. Writing about the 7th. Battalion, Leinster Regiment, J. H. M. Staniforth commented; "The old Battalion was simply disbanded - not amalgamated at all: a big proportion of officers and men was absorbed into the regular B[attalion], the remainder went to form, of all things - a new Entrenching Battalion. (I was offered the post of senior captain in this - but not for this kid, thank you)."⁶⁵ Second Lieutenant Witherow, who had little difficulty in accepting the amalgamation of the 8th. and 9th. Battalions, of the Royal Irish Rifles, was mortified at the disbandment of the battalion;

That day the 6th. February [1918] I will always remember as one of the most depressing that I have ever come through. We had received orders to join the 2nd. Battalion Royal Irish Rifles which had some time previous come into our Division,..., We were such a happy crowd that it is difficult to realise the feeling of depression that settled down on everybody at the prospect of

⁶⁴F. E. Whitton, The History of the Prince of Wales Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians), vol. II, The Great War and the Disbandment of the Regiment, Gale and Polden Ltd., London, no date, p.442.

⁶⁵Letter from Staniforth to his parents, 28/2/18, I.W.M., 67/41/3.

parting...., We were looked upon as strangers by most of the officers who were not originally Ulster Division officers at all and who were not inclined to look at things from the Ulster point of view. They were most careful to distribute us all over the battalion so that we could not collect together in a clan. Although I was senior to several company commanders and therefore ought to have got a company things were so arranged that I should only be a platoon commander. Only officers from Sandhurst were fit to command companies in a regular battalion.⁶⁶

In an attempt to retain the "Irishness" of the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions, most regular Irish battalions serving on the Western Front were drafted into them. This would appear to have adversely affected morale in most of the units concerned. When the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles was transferred to the 36th. (Ulster) Division, Second Lieutenant John Lucy, with the support of most of the other officers of this unit, issued men of the battalion with green flags so that they could show their disgust at being sent to this; "poisonously loyal" formation.⁶⁷ Father Henry Gill, the chaplain of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles noted;

We were to be transferred to the 36th. (Ulster) Division. This news came as a surprise and disagreeable shock to almost everyone in the 25th. Division where we had a well established place in the esteem and good will of all. We were the only Irish battalion in the Division, and had an excellent reputation and were on good terms with our English neighbours. The prospect of a change into a political division was not pleasant, nor did the

⁶⁶T. H. Witherow, "Personal Recollections of the Great War", pp.34-5, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds.

⁶⁷J. F. Lucy, There's a Devil in the Drum, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1938, pp.378-9.

outlook appear very bright. Everything possible was done to have the decision changed, but without success.⁶⁸

In a similar vein, Captain A. J. Trousdell, writing of the transfer of the 1st. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers to the 36th. (Ulster) Division, stated; "The 87th. has been ordered off to join the Ulster men and they are all mud sick about it."⁶⁹ In only one case does there appear to have been any enthusiasm over the transfer of a regular battalion to one of the Irish New Army divisions. Major Guy Nightingale of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, wrote in January 1918; "we are off again + this time we are going to join the 16th. Div.[ision],..., The men are awfully pleased + in many ways I think it will be a good thing, though we have now been 6 years into the 1st. Division,..., It will be the first time the 1st. + 2nd. B[attalio]ns. have been together since S.[outh] Africa."⁷⁰ However, it is significant that Nightingale favoured the transfer as it would reunite the two regular battalions of his regiment, rather than as a move to the 16th. (Irish) Division, *per se*.

The proposal to amalgamate the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions produced the effect of both formations serving in the same corps. Members of the I.P.P. were very much in favour of this policy as a purely political demonstration that men from all parts of Ireland could work together. Speaking to Captain W. T. Colyer, shortly after the Battle of the Somme, Major William Redmond explained his political vision;

I am out for an ideal. Probably you'll think I'm a stupid old buster. Perhaps I am. Perhaps my ideal is impossible. I do want to see a united Ireland. As you know, there is a big gulf between South and North between

⁶⁸H. V. Gill, "As seen by a Chaplain with the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles", pp.154-5, unpublished manuscript, Jesuit Archives, Dublin.

⁶⁹A. J. Trousdell, Journal for 1916-17, p.34, unpublished manuscript, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds.

⁷⁰Letter, Nightingale to his mother, 30/1/18, Nightingale papers, P.R.O., PRO30/71/3.

Catholic and Protestant. Catholic as I am, I want that gulf to be bridged over, and I believe it can be. I have worked for it all my life. Out here is a golden opportunity. Here we have two whole Divisions, the 16th. Irish Division, representing the Catholic, and the 36th. Ulster Division. At present these two Divisions are kept severely apart, on the traditional assumption that they would fight each other like wild cats if they came into contact. Well, I am exerting the utmost political pressure to bring them together, because I believe they would do no such thing if they were fighting side by side against a common foe. It would be the first step towards the ideal. Then - well, if only I could get amongst these Irish lads in the trenches, if only I could see for myself Ulster shaking hands with County Cork, I should feel that I have not shriven in vain.⁷¹

Meanwhile, Captain Stephen Gwynn, M.P., was writing; "we are alongside of the Ulster division + making great friends with them - which is well."⁷²

However, it appears that relationships between men of the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions were not all that satisfactory. Lieutenant Colonel Feilding noted that while the divisions played football against each other, in front of crowds of 3,000 spectators; "a wag on the Ulster side was heard to say, 'I wonder if we shall get into trouble for fraternising with the enemy.'"⁷³ Denys Reitz related how he, as the C.O. of the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, prevented a major outbreak of violence between the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions;

In the course of the evening I sent a fatigue party to fetch supplies for our canteen from the Ulster depot. Soon after their return I heard a violent

⁷¹W. T. Colyer, "War Impressions of a Temporary Soldier", unpaginated, chapter 12, I.W.M., 76/51/1.

⁷²Letter, Gwynn to his cousin, Amelia, 26/12/16, P.R.O.N.I., D.2912/1/19.

⁷³R. Feilding, War Letters to a Wife, p.170.

commotion in the marquee tent where we kept our stores. There was the sound of breaking crockery, mingled with oaths and shouts, and, rushing up to enquire, I found that the men were busy wrecking the place. When I demanded the reason, several of them angrily flourished bottles in my face, to the accompaniment of threats and curses against the bloody Orangemen. To me the bottles seemed harmless, for they contained only soda-water, but, when I asked for enlightenment, it appeared that the root of the trouble was the labels, which bore the title 'Boyne Water'. The men started off in a body for the Ulster Division, to avenge what they considered a mortal insult. I had heard of the Battle of the Boyne, but it conveyed no political implications and I thought the men had gone crazy. Fortunately, I was able to telephone through to the Ulster headquarters, who hastily turned out several hundred men to surround the malcontents; and with the tactful assistance of our Adjutant, young Hartery, who understood Irish politics, we managed to get our men back to camp without bloodshed.⁷⁴

At a more basic level, Lieutenant Witherow, an officer of the 8th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, was arrested by a sentry of the 6th. Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, when he strayed into the 16th. (Irish) Divisional area. It took the intervention of Captain Stephen Gwynn, M.P., to release him.⁷⁵ Likewise, officers of the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers felt that bringing the two Irish divisions together in this way would damage the men's morale.⁷⁶ Therefore, it appears that while the joint service of the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions provided good political propaganda for the I.P.P., its effect on discipline and morale in these formations was, in many cases, a negative one.

⁷⁴D. Reitz, *Trekking On*, p.182.

⁷⁵The papers of Second Lieutenant[sic.] T. H. Witherow, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds, p.5.

⁷⁶W. T. Colyer, "War Impressions of a Temporary Soldier", unpublished manuscript, unpaginated, but chapter 23, I.W.M., 76/65/1.

The actual battlefield performance of Irish units during this period demonstrates very few problems in discipline and morale. Certainly morale in both the 16th. (Irish) and 36th. (Ulster) Divisions, was adversely affected by the botched action at Langemarck, late in 1917, especially as this followed the highly successful action at Messines. Indeed, at least one staff officer felt that the 16th. (Irish) Division was too tired to carry out this attack.⁷⁷

In terms of front line discipline, it would appear that there were two unofficial truces carried out by Irish units in this period. The most serious of these took place in the 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers in February 1917, when, following a trench raid, a cease-fire was organised to evacuate the wounded. Apparently Major General W. B. Hickie established a Court of Inquiry to look into this affair.⁷⁸ Also, in February 1917, the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers allowed the Germans to rescue some of their wounded after the Germans erected a notice which read, 'Let save two wounded Kamerards.'⁷⁹

Having considered the whole issue of amalgamations, disbandments and breaches of front line discipline, it is worth making some comments about the differences in discipline in Irish regular and service battalions. Table 6.7, overleaf, demonstrates that, even by this stage of the war, there were marked differences between regular and service battalions. For example drunkenness is noticeably higher in regular infantry battalions, than their service equivalents.

A comparison of tables 6.7 and 5.5 demonstrates some interesting points. Firstly, it is noticeable that the numbers of courts martial in some units had changed little in the October 1916 to February 1918 over the October 1915 to September 1916 periods, even allowing for the different timescales involved. The 6th. Battalion, Connaught Rangers, with 60 men tried by courts martial in the first period had 57 in

⁷⁷Interview with Major General Sir N. Holmes, tape 430, Liddle Collection, University of Leeds.

⁷⁸R. Feilding, *War Letters to a Wife*, pp.154-9. I have been unable to trace a copy of the proceedings of this Court of Inquiry.

⁷⁹Captain E. A. Godson diaries, p.13, I.W.M.

Table 6.7. Offences for which men serving in sample Irish battalions were tried by Courts Martial, October 1916 to February 1918.

Offence	6/	8/	8/	9/	10/	14/	2/	1/	5th.	13/		
	CR	RDF	Inns F.	R.I. Rifs.	Inns F.	R.I. Rifs	RDF Rifs	R.I. Rifs	Inns F.	Lan-cers NIH	R.I. Rifs	
War Treason	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D.O.R.A.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Offence against an inhabitant	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mutiny	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cowardice	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Desertion	0	4	5	2	4	0	11	2	12	1	0	0
Absence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Striking/violent	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Insubordination	1	1	3	1	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	0
Disobedience	3	4	3	0	0	1	9	2	4	0	0	0
Quitting post	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Drunkenness	12	4	3	7	4	4	19	9	15	1	2	1
Injuring property	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Loss of property	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Theft	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	1	1
Indecency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Resisting escort	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Escaping confinement	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Misc. and multiple offences	36	30	12	7	15	14	49	38	31	3	4	4
Misc. civil offences	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Self-inflicted wound	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fraudulent enlistment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Enlisting after discharge	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
False answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neglect	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fraud	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	60	46	28	18	24	19	93	54	63	9	8	7

the latter, while similar figures for the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers were 93 and 95. Secondly, units which received, as we have already seen, large drafts of English conscripts, such as the 14th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, appear to have seen a small, though not excessive, rise in their courts martial rate. Thirdly, it is noticeable that the number of men tried for drunkenness rose sharply in the October 1916 to February 1918 period, in the 9th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, the numbers rose from seven to twelve, while in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, it was from 19 to 43. A final point worth stressing, in regard to both tables is that battalions of the 36th. (Ulster) Division generally had fewer men tried by courts martial, than their counterparts in the 16th. (Irish) Division.

David Englander has suggested that 1917 saw a tightening of the British courts martial system, with harsher punishments being awarded, most notably in September 1917 when twenty men were executed, the most for any month of the war.⁸⁰ Tables 6.1 to 6.6 demonstrate that indiscipline was not escalating in 1917, while table 6.8, overleaf, equally does not support this view. Most offenders were still sentenced to periods of field punishment number one, with executions and periods of penal servitude being imposed very rarely. Only in the 2nd. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers is any significant change in this direction clear, when tables 5.7 and 6.8 are compared, as the number of men sentenced to hard labour increased from seven during the October 1915 to September 1916 period, to thirteen in the October 1916 to February 1918 period. Another point worthy of note is that, in the latter period, a much higher number of N.C.O.s of the 1st. Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, were reduced following trial by courts martial.

It would seem appropriate, at this stage of this thesis, to discuss the reasons for the removal of most of the Southern Irish regiments' Special and General Reserve battalions from Ireland in November 1917. While none of these units served on the

⁸⁰D. Englander, "Discipline and morale in the British army, 1917-18", in J. Horne (ed.), *State, society and mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997.

Table 6.8. Sentences imposed on men serving in sample Irish units tried by Courts Martial, October 1916 to February 1918.

Sentence	6/CR	RDF	8/	9/	10/	14/	2/	2/	1/	5th.	13/	
			R. Inns	R.I. Rifs	R. Inns				R.I. Rifs	R. Inns		Lanc - ers
Death	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Penal Servitude	1	0	2	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0
Hard Labour	7	4	3	3	4	0	13	3	3	0	1	0
Imprisonment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Detention	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
F.P.1	26	22	14	8	11	7	43	32	22	4	5	4
F.P.2	4	4	1	0	3	0	1	4	3	0	1	0
Discharged with ignominy/cashiered	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reduced/reprimanded	4	2	2	3	2	2	12	5	13	0	0	0
Stoppages, fines, etc.	1	2	0	1	0	4	2	1	2	0	0	0
Quashed/not confirmed	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	4	1	0	1
Suspended sentence	1	6	3	1	0	0	8	4	12	0	0	1
Not guilty, acquitted, etc.	15	6	3	1	4	4	10	3	3	3	1	1
TOTALS	60	46	28	18	24	19	93	54	63	9	8	7

Western Front, they provided a large number of drafts to Irish regular and service battalions, and thus merit some attention in this work. In November 1917 the Special Reserve and General Reserve battalions of the Connaught Rangers, Leinster Regiment, Royal Munster Fusiliers and Royal Dublin Fusiliers were all moved to Great Britain. The Special Reserve battalions of the Royal Irish Regiment, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Royal Irish Rifles and Royal Irish Fusiliers all left Ireland in April 1918.⁸¹

⁸¹These transfers are outlined in Appendix 1.

The removal of all remaining Irish reserve battalions from Ireland in April 1918 is simply explained by the fact that it was not felt helpful to have Irish units enforcing conscription, if it was introduced in Ireland.⁸² However, the reasons for the move of twelve Irish reserve battalions in November 1917, are more complex.

Certainly, at the time, a number of officers believed that disloyalty in Irish units was responsible for the transfer. J. H. M. Staniforth, then serving with the 4th. Battalion, Leinster Regiment, commented; "All the Irish battalions have been moved out of Ireland and replaced by English troops to prevent Sinn Fein contagion."⁸³ Meanwhile, Second Lieutenant P. J. Mansfield, whose unit, the 3rd. Battalion, Cameron Highlanders, had been sent to Ireland in November 1917 noted;

Without any previous warning, the whole of the troops in Ireland (i.e. Irish troops) were shifted over to Scotland in one night, and all Scottish troops sent over here, the reasons being (1) The increased activity of the Sinn Feiners (2) the proposal to bring conscription into Ireland, in which latter case, the Irish troops were considered by the higher authorities to be unreliable in the case of their being ordered to fire on their own countrymen - hence the importation of Scotchmen to do the dirty work.⁸⁴

However, there appears to be little evidence to suggest that Irish reserve battalions were transferred to Britain due to fears of subversion. Indeed, since the outbreak of the war, Irish republicans had simply opposed recruitment, seeing those who enlisted as, at best misguided and at worst traitors. For example, James Connolly referred to Irish recruits as; "these poor misguided brothers of ours [who] have been

⁸²D. Fitzpatrick, Politics and Irish Life 1913-1921; Provincial Experience of War and Revolution, Gregg Revivals, Aldershot, 1993, p.26.

⁸³Letter, Staniforth to his parents, 7/12/17, I.W.M., 67/41/3.

⁸⁴Letter, Second Lieutenant P. J. Mansfield to Dr. B. O. A. Mansfield, 21/11/17, copy in Judge Advocate General's papers, P.R.O., WO83/30, p.793. Second Lieutenant Mansfield was tried by court martial for sending this sensitive information to Dr. Mansfield, who was living in the U.S.A..

tricked and deluded into giving battle for England.”⁸⁵ While Roger Casement suggested that recruits were; “Not Irishmen but English soldiers.”⁸⁶ It therefore appears that Sinn Fein, or other advanced nationalist groups, had no concerted policy of attempting to infiltrate Irish units of the British army, seeing men in them as already lost to the republican cause.⁸⁷

In this respect Sinn Fein differed greatly from earlier Republican groups. The Fenian movement in the late 1860s had been relatively successful in infiltrating the British army, as A. J. Semple states;

In the final analysis it is impossible to say how many Fenian soldiers there were in Ireland or outside of it. There may have been some hundreds or some thousands but no matter how many there were, they were ineffective largely because the Fenian organisation in the army was ineffective.⁸⁸

In the 1790s a number of unconcerted, but effective attempts were made by United Irishmen to infiltrate Irish regiments. This policy was particularly successful in yeomanry units in counties Wexford, Kildare, Cork and Dublin corps and one County Dublin corps, the Rathcoole Infantry proved disaffected almost to a man.⁸⁹ By contrast, Sir Henry McAnally concluded that attempts to disaffect the Irish militia in

⁸⁵J. Connolly, “The Slums and The Trenches”, in J. Connolly, Collected Works, vol.II, New Books Publications, Dublin, 1988, p.147.

⁸⁶T. P. Dooley, Irishmen or English Soldiers? The Times and World of a Southern Catholic Irish Man (1876-1916) Enlisting in the British Army During the First World War, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 1995, p.1.

⁸⁷P. Callan, “Voluntary Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland during the First World War”, unpublished Ph.D., U.C.D., 1984; C. Townshend, Political Violence in Ireland: Government and Resistance since 1848, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988 and E. O’Halpin, The Decline of the Union, British Government in Ireland 1892-1920, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1987, all make no mention of any Sinn Fein attempt to infiltrate the Irish regiments and nothing has been found to contradict this.

⁸⁸A. J. Semple, “The Fenian Infiltration of the British Army”, Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, 52, 1974, p.160.

⁸⁹A. Blackstock, An Ascendancy Army: The Irish Yeomanry 1796-1834, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 1998, pp.151-2.

the 1790s were, generally, unsuccessful.⁹⁰ However, more recent research has shown that United Irishmen counted 15,000 Irish Militia men amongst their supporters, and, indeed, that this confidence in the disaffection within the Crown forces led to a neglect of training amongst the United Irishmen.⁹¹ The most famous example of United Irish infiltration into a military unit in the 1790s was actually in a regular regiment, the 5th. Royal Irish Dragoons. This unit enlisted a large number of disloyal recruits in 1798 and, following the discovery of a planned mutiny, was disbanded on the 10th. April 1799, not being re-embodied until 1858.⁹²

However, Sinn Fein appears to have made few inroads into Irish reserve units. As graph 6.9, overleaf, illustrates, the number of courts martial held in these sample reserve units varied considerably. However, post April 1916 there was no massive upturn in military crime. The high courts martial rate in the 3rd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, from May to October 1918 seems to be explained by the fact that, over this period, this unit absorbed most of the other reserve battalions of the Royal Irish Rifles. Thus, during 1918 this battalion simply had more men than previously. Instead these transfers of Irish units to Great Britain can be explained by cases of rifle stealing, violence against Irish soldiers by the general public, defective training in Irish Command and recruiting problems.

The theft of Irish soldiers' rifles by Irish Volunteers appears to have been increasing in 1917.⁹³ The worst example of this occurred in November 1917, in Longford, when two hundred rifles were stolen from the 11th. Battalion, Royal Dublin

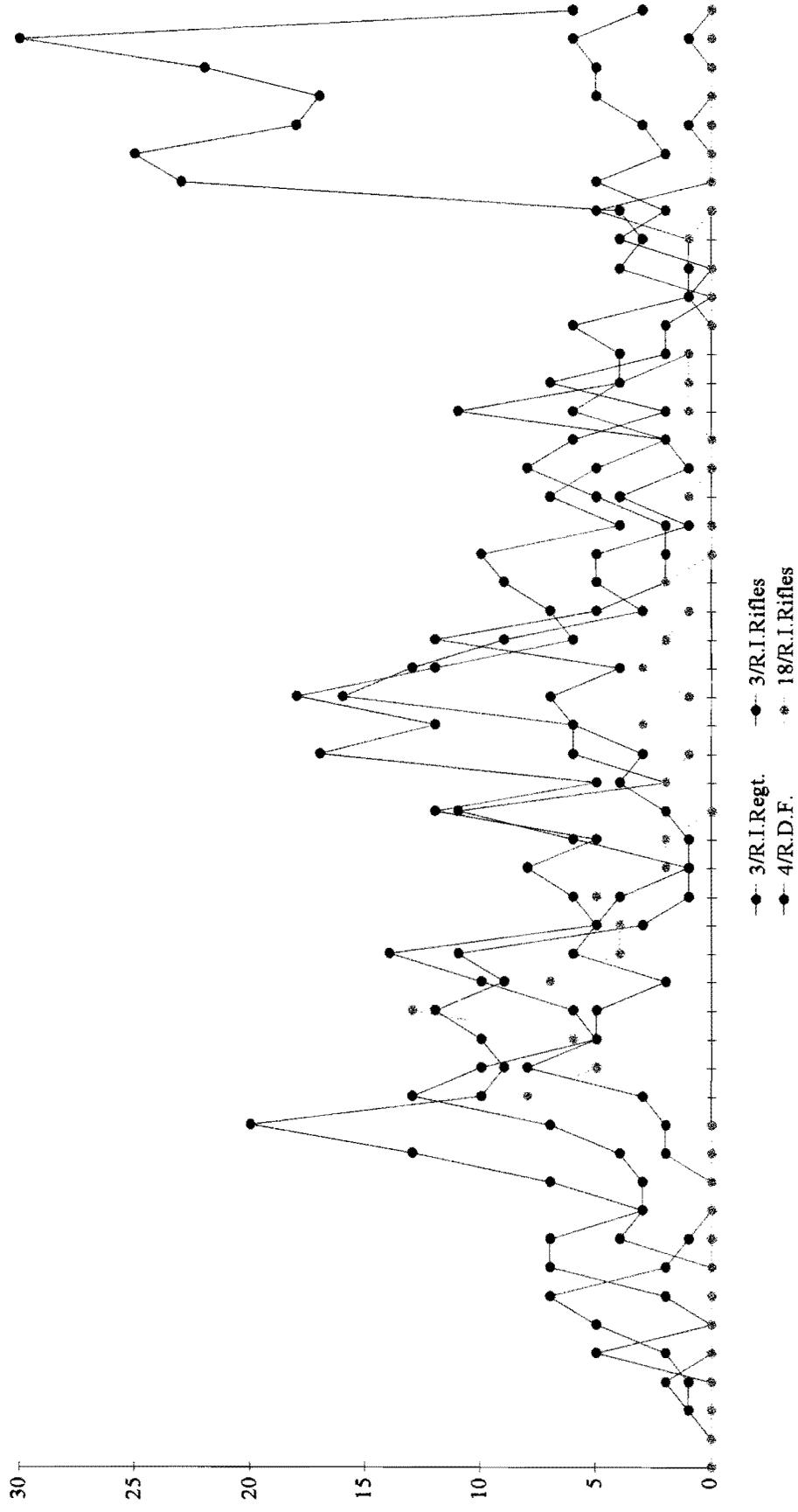
⁹⁰H. McAnally, *The Irish Militia 1793-1816, A Social and Military Study*, Clonmore and Reynolds, Dublin, 1949, pp.112-3.

⁹¹T. Bartlett, "Defence, counter-insurgency and rebellion: Ireland, 1793-1803", in T. Bartlett and K. Jeffery (eds.), *A Military History of Ireland*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p.264.

⁹²A. E. C. Bredin, *A History of the Irish Soldier*, Century Books, Belfast, 1987, p.219.

⁹³See Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers, 1917, entries 19147 and 25012, National Archives, Dublin.

Graph 6.9 The Court Martial records of selected Irish reserve battalions, 4th August 1914 to 11th November 1918.



Fusiliers.⁹⁴ How exactly this theft occurred is unclear. Captain Terence Poulter, a former officer in the battalion, wrote, sixty seven years after the event that men of the Longford I.R.A. had infiltrated the 11th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, this appears unlikely, as, in a report to the War Cabinet;

Lord French reported that, in regard to the unit most concerned with the recent loss of rifles [11th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers] this unit had paraded for embarkation with only two absentees, which pointed to the fact that the loyalty and discipline of the unit were not seriously affected, and the loss of arms could not be attributed to treacherous or seditious action.⁹⁶

Violence against Irish soldiers also appears to have been on the increase. J. H. M. Staniforth, writing of the situation in Limerick, noted; "This town in particular is a nest of Sinn Feinry, and our men won't go through the riverside streets after dark unless there are two or three of them together."⁹⁷ The situation in Dublin was little better; General Sir Bryan Mahon, the G.O.C. in Ireland noted, in June 1917; "In addition to many other unsatisfactory indications, several cases have recently been reported to me of abuse and hostile demonstrations being levelled against the Troops in Dublin when proceeding on their normal duties through the streets."⁹⁸ It appears that soldiers in Cork were also being attacked on a frequent basis.⁹⁹

⁹⁴P. Callan, "Voluntary Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland", p.267.

⁹⁵*Irish Times*, 24/4/84, cited, *ibid*, p.267.

⁹⁶Extract from War Cabinet 267, 9/11/17, included in "Measures to be taken with regard to unauthorized drilling of parties in Ireland", P.R.O., WO32/9507.

⁹⁷Letter, Staniforth to his parents, 14/3/17, cited J. H. M. Staniforth, "Kitchener's Soldier", p.195, I.W.M., 67/41/1.

⁹⁸"Report by Commander in Chief on the Situation in Ireland, 1917", P.R.O., WO32/9513.

⁹⁹Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers, 1917, 28936, National Archives, Dublin. While this file is included in the catalogue of the Chief Secretary's Office it was not available when I visited the National Archives. It appears that in 1922 many files on military topics were removed from Dublin and, while the staff at the National Archives

Training policies in Irish reserve units also appear to have been defective and it is possible that the transfer of units to Great Britain was intended, partially, to remedy this. In March 1917, Captain Staniforth commenting on his posting to the 4th. Battalion, Leinster Regiment¹⁰⁰ stated; "They've given me B Company to play around with, but as far as I can see nobody ever dreams of doing any work or attending any parades whatever, leaving it all to the N.C.O.s.. One subaltern hasn't been on parade yet, and he arrived over six months ago,..., or so he says."¹⁰¹

Meanwhile, Major General Sir Oliver Nugent was so dissatisfied at the drafts which the 36th. (Ulster) Division was receiving that he asked one of his staff officers, while on leave, to inspect the division's reserve formations. Nugent wrote to Brigadier General Hacket-Pain, the former G.O.C. of 108th. Brigade, who was then commanding the 15th. Reserve Brigade;

The gist of Mudie's report was that young officers are not taught their duties as regards their personal responsibility towards their men,..., I might mention that a number of wounded officers returned to the Division after a tour of duty with the Reserve Brigade to whom I have spoken, make the same comment, viz. that such experience as they have gained out here is not made use of for purposes of instruction at home.¹⁰²

Finally, with regard to reserve formations, the point must be made that the downturn in Irish recruiting removed one of their *raison d'être* for staying in Ireland.

informed me that these were now in the P.R.O., I was unable to trace them there. Indeed, it would seem likely that the hasty withdrawal of the British Administration from Dublin in 1922 meant that many sensitive papers were simply destroyed.

¹⁰⁰Staniforth had been invalided to Britain from the 7th. Battalion, Leinster Regiment, as he required extensive dental treatment, Personnel file on Lieutenant [sic.] J. H. M. Staniforth, P.R.O., WO339/23115.

¹⁰¹Letter, Staniforth to his parents, 4/3/17, cited, J. H. M. Staniforth, "Kitchener's Soldier", p.192, I.W.M., 67/41/1.

¹⁰²Undated letter (November 1917?) Nugent to Hacket-Pain, Farren Connel papers, P.R.O.N.I., MIC/571/10.

Rifleman Hutchinson, serving in the 18th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles, in 1917 and 1918, noted that many of his comrades were English or Scottish conscripts.¹⁰³ Equally, when a number of Irish reserve units were disbanded in England, this appears to have, simply, been in response to recruiting difficulties. Cyril Falls noted that the 17th., 18th. and 19th. Battalions, Royal Irish Rifles were disbanded and their personnel sent to the 3rd. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles in April 1918 as; “There were no longer anything like the number of Irish recruits to fill the ranks of so many battalions.”¹⁰⁴

Finally, in this chapter, some brief comments must be made regarding morale and discipline in the B.E.F. as a whole in 1917. Historians have, generally, found this a difficult issue to examine. D. Englander and J. Osborne commented; “The Russian armies collapsed, the Italians deserted, the French mutinied: the British soldier however, apparently did little more than curse his fate.”¹⁰⁵ This sort of approach has led to some rather bleak portraits of British discipline and morale in 1917. The presumption of some historians appears to be that as there were serious problems in other European armies, then there must have been equally forceful pressures on British soldiers. David Englander has given a further demonstration of this in his most recent work. After concluding that the British Fifth Army did not suffer from major disciplinary problems in late 1917 and early 1918, he continued;

It had been a close run thing. How close is still a matter for speculation. Whether there was a mutiny in the making which, but for the March offensive, would have issued in a spectacular conflagration comparable with those in other armies is an intriguing possibility, . . . The

¹⁰³See J. Hutchinson, “The Early Reminiscences of a Royal Irish Rifleman, 1917-19”, P.R.O.N.I., D.3804, pp.19 and 24.

¹⁰⁴C. Falls, The History of the First Seven Battalions, The Royal Irish Rifles, (Now the Royal Ulster Rifles) in the Great War, vol. II, Gale and Polden Ltd., Aldershot, 1925, p.162.

¹⁰⁵D. Englander and J. Osborne, “Jack, Tommy and Henry Dubb: The Armed Forces and the Working Class”, Historical Journal, 21, 3, 1978, p.594.

British army, like others, became deeply depressed during 1917-18.¹⁰⁶

Of course, Englander's views are based on some inescapable facts. 1917 witnessed the largest mutiny in the B.E.F. during the Great War, namely that at Etaples Base Camp; the High Command was concerned about Socialist and Pacifist political pressure on British troops,¹⁰⁷ and, of course, the B.E.F. now contained a large number of conscripts.

Before considering these issues in more detail, the point must be made that the British army was, in many respects, different from other European armies in 1917. Firstly, British losses, while high, were comparatively low in European terms. For example, in the French case, casualties in the first fifteen months of the war, almost equalled those of the next three years.¹⁰⁸ Related to this point is the fact that Britain, entering the war with a small, volunteer, regular army did not reach its maximum effort on the Western Front until 1916.¹⁰⁹ Thirdly, there was still consent for the war in Britain, which was certainly no longer the case in Russia or Italy.¹¹⁰ Fourthly, the British army did not face the serious ethnic tensions faced by the Austro-Hungarian, or

¹⁰⁶D. Englander, "Discipline and morale in the British army, 1917-1918", in J. Horne (ed.), State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, p.141.

¹⁰⁷G. Dallas and D. Gill, The Unknown Army: Mutinies in the British Army in World War I, Verso, London, 1985, p.77 and N. Macready, Annals of An Active Life, Hutchinson and Co., London, 1924, vol.I, p.277.

¹⁰⁸D. Porch, "The French Army and the Spirit of the Offensive, 1900-14", in B. Bond and I. Roy (eds.), War and Society, A Yearbook of Military History, Croom Helm, London, 1975, p.117.

¹⁰⁹I. F. W. Beckett, "The Nation in Arms, 1914-18", in I. F. W. Beckett and K. Simpson (eds.), A Nation in Arms; A social study of the British army in the First World War, Tom Donovan Publishing, London, 1990, p.12.

¹¹⁰See, R. Service, "The Industrial Workers", in R. Service, Society and Politics in the Russian Revolution, The Macmillian Press Ltd., London, 1992, p.154 and G. Procacci, "A 'Latecomer' in War: The Case of Italy", in F. Coetzee and M. Shevin-Coetzee (eds.), Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War, Berghahn Books, Oxford, 1995, pp.3-26.

even German armies, in 1917-18.¹¹¹ Finally, the point must be made that some armies which “collapsed” in 1917 were actually able to take the field again.¹¹²

To return to disciplinary and morale problems in the B.E.F. in 1917, it is clear that a number of these have been overstated. The Etaples mutiny was, in many ways, a disaster waiting to happen and was also a very atypical mutiny. Colonel S. Jourdain, who, as a Second Lieutenant, served at Etaples in mid 1916, was shocked by the “brutal N.C.O.s”, slack organisation and pointless bayonet practice, which took place there.¹¹³ Captain C. C. Miller, of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, who served at Etaples during the mutiny commented that the camp, “was a matter of constant nagging and petty irritation combined with rotten rations and wretched organisation,” and, indeed, after the mutiny, he refused to identify ringleaders.¹¹⁴ There was, therefore, some sympathy from officers for the plight of other ranks at Etaples and, indeed, those targeted by the mutineers were military policemen rather than officers.¹¹⁵ However, as appendix 3 demonstrates, Etaples was by no means the only mutiny which occurred in the B.E.F. during the Great War and, given that it involved troops in reserve, it was, arguably not the most serious. Appendix 3 illustrates that mutinies were a constant, if infrequent, aspect of British military life.

¹¹¹ M. Cornwall, “Morale and Patriotism in the Austro-Hungarian Army, 1914-18”, in J. Horne (ed.), *State, society and mobilization in Europe*, pp.175-7, G. Wawro, “Morale in the Austro-Hungarian Army: the Evidence of Hapsburg Army Campaign Reports and Allied Intelligence Officers”, in H. Cecil and P. H. Liddle, (eds.), *Facing Armageddon, The First World War Experienced*, Leo Cooper, London, 1996, pp.401-3, H. Strachan, “The Morale of the German Army 1917-18”, in *ibid*, pp.386-8 and A. Kramer, “Wackes at war: Alsace-Lorraine and the failure of German national mobilization, 1914-18”, in J. Horne (ed.), *State Society and Mobilization in Europe*, pp.110-114.

¹¹² On the reformation of the French army following the mutinies of 1917, see, L. V. Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience; The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War I*, Princetown University Press, Princetown, 1994, pp.215-243.

¹¹³ Interview with Colonel S. Jourdain, I.W.M., Sound Archives, 11214/2.

¹¹⁴ C. C. Miller, “A letter from India to my daughters in England”, I.W.M., 83/3/1, pp.25-7.

¹¹⁵ D. Gill and G. Dallas, “Mutiny at Etaples Base in 1917”, *Past and Present*, 69, 1975, p.92.

Concerns about Socialist and Pacifist influence on British soldiers were largely unfounded. Attempts by some socialists to create soldiers' councils, in imitation of Russian soviets were almost totally unsuccessful.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, the British High Command reacted relatively quickly to this perceived threat. By January 1918 a lecture series on current affairs had been approved for use in all B.E.F. formations with a view to providing both education in citizenship and to provide men with useful skills for their return to civilian life.¹¹⁷ Due to the return of open warfare in March 1918 this lecture programme was largely abandoned. Nevertheless, it is perhaps significant that one of the earliest of these citizenship lectures, entitled, "America and the War", was delivered to the 16th. (Irish) Division in October 1917 by Dr. Kelman.¹¹⁸

The assimilation of conscripts into the British army appears to have caused relatively few problems, as graphs 6.1 to 6.6 and 6.10, overleaf, demonstrate. In the sample of non-Irish units, indiscipline did not greatly increase over this period. Equally, as Englander and Osborne point out, indiscipline in the Royal Navy was much more likely to occur amongst regulars than conscripts and the fact that most regular soldiers had been killed by 1917 meant that there was little serious indiscipline in the B.E.F..¹¹⁹

Finally, the admittedly very sparse number of censorship reports surviving, suggest that the B.E.F. was suffering from relatively few morale problems. One such report stated;

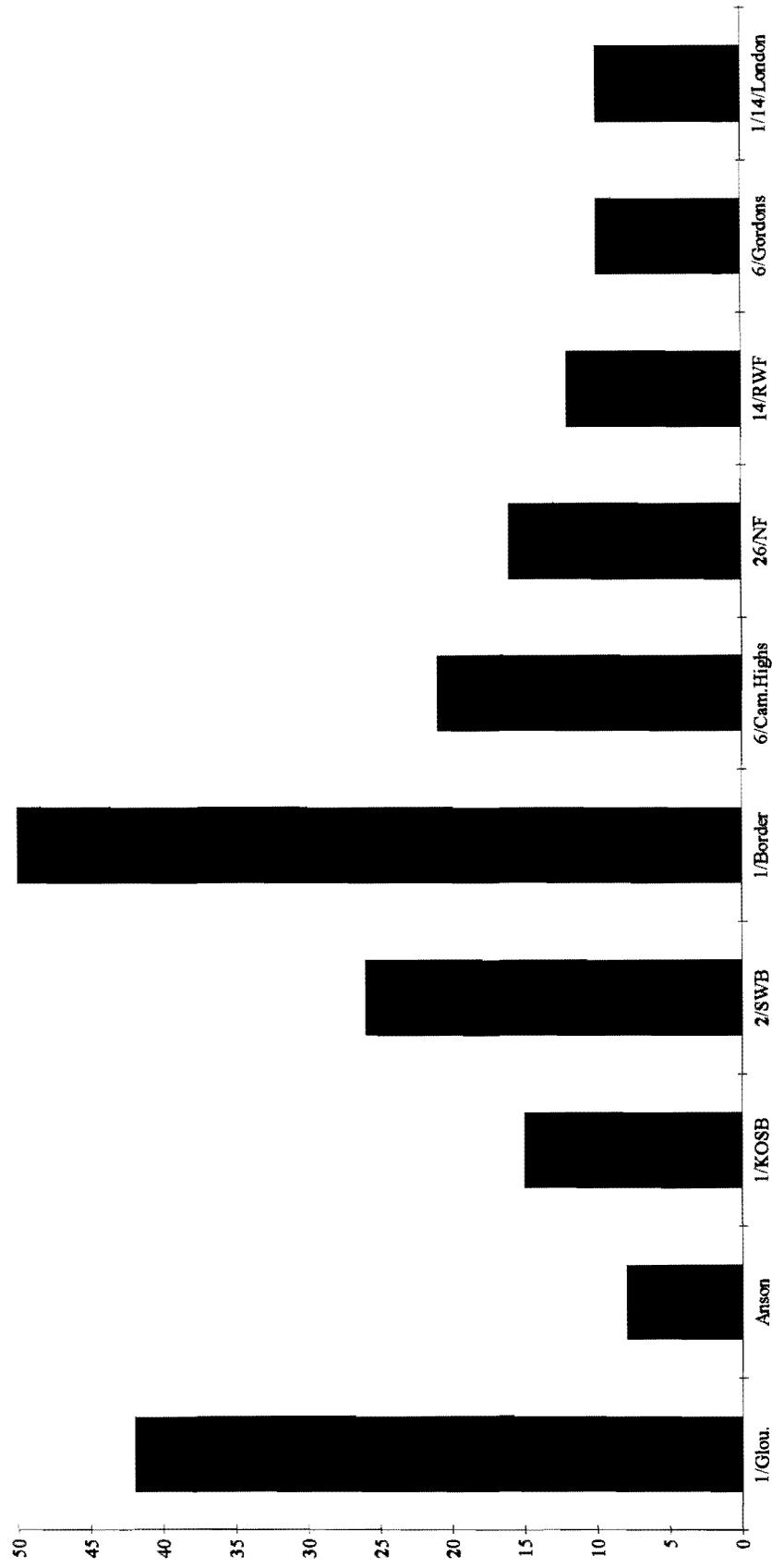
¹¹⁶D. Englander and J. Osbourne (ed.), "Jack, Tommy and Henry Dubb", pp.604-5 and L. James, *Mutiny in the British and Commonwealth Forces, 1797-1956*, Buchan and Enright Publishers, London, 1987, pp.96-7.

¹¹⁷S. P. Mackenzie, *Politics and Military Morale: Current Affairs and Citizenship Education in the British Army, 1914-1950*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992, p.12.

¹¹⁸Entry for 12/10/17, Adjutant and Quarter Master General's war diary, 16th. (Irish) Division, P.R.O., WO95/1957.

¹¹⁹D. Englander and J. Osbourne, "Jack, Tommy and Henry Dubb", p.602.

Graph 6.10. The number of courts martial held in sample non-Irish battalions of the B.E.F., 1st October 1916 to 28th February 1918.



The Morale of the Army is sound. In spite of increasing references to peace which occupy much space in the newspapers, in spite of the Russian debacle and the Italian set back there is ample ground for the belief that the British army is firmly convinced, not only of its ability to defeat the enemy and its superiority man to man, but also of the dangers of a premature peace.¹²⁰

In conclusion, it would appear that, contrary to the scenario outlined by some historians, the British army did not suffer from a major crisis of morale in 1917. D. Englander's findings, that there were no serious disciplinary problems in 5th. Army, appears to be borne out by the study of the courts martial records for the sample of non-Irish units.

The situation, with regard to Irish units is rather more complex. Sinn Fein, unlike previous republican groups, did not seek to infiltrate Irish units in the British army, and there is no evidence to suggest that Irish battalions serving on the Western Front were subverted during this period. However, the decision to remove Irish Special Reserve battalions from Ireland in late 1917 and early 1918 does demonstrate that there were some doubts regarding the reliability of Irish soldiers.

While the decision to amalgamate and disband Irish service battalions was inspired purely by recruiting difficulties, it is noticeable that, in practice, this was used in a disciplinary fashion. While, when the decision was taken to reduce British divisions from thirteen to ten battalions, the most junior battalions were disbanded, this was not the case with Irish battalions. Thus, for example, the 7th. Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles and 9th. Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers were disbanded, before their more junior sister battalions, due to disciplinary problems.

¹²⁰Censor's report on morale, c. January 1918(?), P.R.O., WO106/401.