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Tommy Atkins, War Office Reform and the Social and Cultural Presence of the Late-Victorian Army in Britain, c.1868-1899

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**TOMMY ATKINS, WAR OFFICE REFORM AND THE SOCIAL AND
CULTURAL PRESENCE OF THE LATE-VICTORIAN ARMY
IN BRITAIN, c.1868 – 1899**

By

EDWARD PETER JOSHUA GOSLING

A thesis submitted to Plymouth University
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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**TOMMY ATKINS, WAR OFFICE REFORM AND THE
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PRESENCE OF THE LATE-VICTORIAN ARMY IN BRITAIN
c.1868 – 1899**

Edward Peter Joshua Gosling

This thesis examines the development of the soldier in late-Victorian Britain in light of the movement to rehabilitate the public image of the ordinary ranks initiated by the Cardwell-Childers Reforms. Venerated in popular culture, Tommy Atkins became a symbol of British imperial strength and heroism. Socially, however, attitudes to the rank-and-file were defined by a pragmatic realism purged of such sentiments, the likes of which would characterise the British public's relationship with their army for over thirty years. Scholars of both imperial culture and the Victorian military have identified this dual persona of Tommy Atkins, however, a dedicated study into the true nature of the soldier's position has yet to be undertaken. The following research will seek to redress this omission.

The soldier is approached through the perspective of three key influences which defined his development. The first influence, the politics of the War Office, exposes a progressive series of schemes which, cultivated for over a decade, sought to redefine the soldier through the popularisation of military service and the professionalisation of the military's public relations strategy and apparatus. A forgotten component of the Cardwell-Childers Reforms, the schemes have not before been scrutinised. Despite the ingenuity of the schemes devised, the social rehabilitation of the soldier failed, primarily, it will be argued, because the government refused to improve his pay. The public's response to the Cardwell-Childers Reforms and the British perception of the ordinary soldier in the decades following their introduction form the second perspective. Through surveys of the local and London press and mainstream literature, it is demonstrated the soldier, in part as a result of the reforms, underwent a social transition, precipitated by his entering the public consciousness and encouraged by a resulting fascination in the military life. The final perspective presented in this thesis is from within the rank-and-file itself. Through the examination of specialist newspaper, diary and memoir material the direct experiences of the soldiers themselves are explored. Amid the extensive public and political discussion of their nature and status, the soldier also engaged in the debate. The perspective of the rank-and-file provides direct context for the established perspectives of the British public and the War Office, but also highlights how the soldier both supported and opposed the reforms and was acutely aware of the social status he possessed. This thesis will examine the public and political treatment of the soldier in the late-nineteenth century and question how far the conflicting ideas of soldier-hero and soldier-beggar were reconciled.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at Plymouth University has not formed part of any other degree, either at Plymouth University or at another establishment.

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Relevant seminars and conferences were regularly attended at which work was often presented, including at the: British Commission for Military History Postgraduate Conference, King's College London (2011); The Role of the Arts in History, Plymouth (2012), Race, Nation and Empire on the Victorian Popular Stage, Lancaster (2012); The Global and Imperial History Network, Exeter (2013); School of History Research Seminar Series, Plymouth (2013), Modern British History Seminar Series, St John's College Oxford (2013-14); Military Masculinities in the Long Nineteenth Century, Hull (2015).

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**INTRODUCTION: TOMMY ATKINS, WAR OFFICE REFORM AND THE
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PRESENCE OF THE LATE-VICTORIAN ARMY
IN BRITAIN, C.1868 – 1899**

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an interdisciplinary study which explores the influence of politics, culture and military identity on the ordinary soldier in late-Victorian Britain, focussing on the presence of the military in British society and the movement towards social integration and image rehabilitation experienced by the lower ranks. In the nineteenth century, the rank-and-file of the British Army struggled to dispel the popular perception that the soldier was a pariah in the social class from which he was drawn. As Edward Spiers has noted, ‘service in the ranks remained a career of lowly status and of limited esteem’.¹ The harsh conditions, severe restrictions on lifestyle and the brutal discipline of military service had encouraged in civil society the belief enlistment was a social taboo. For the families of prospective recruits, as well as the men themselves, there was the fear that the army would corrupt their character and that they would be lost to the family forever.

There was a traditional antipathy towards standing armies in the British psyche, supposedly rooted in the English Civil War. The Royal Navy (RN) enjoyed supremacy of the waves and, being an island nation, was considered the guardian of British freedom.² Not that the RN was impervious to scrutiny as increases in the naval estimates placed a severe burden on the Exchequer. The British Army, however, faced retrenchment under the Liberal governments as it lost out to the RN over the allocation of funds. The ideas of a large standing army and conscription were rejected as

¹ E. Spiers, *Late Victorian Army 1868–1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p.147.

² M. Howard, ‘Empire, Race and War’, *History Today*, Vol. 3, (December 1981), pp.4-11.

impossibly costly threats to democracy and the public purse.³ Despite relying on a volunteer army, the soldiering profession in Britain suffered from a marked unpopularity, the result of which was a perpetual struggle for the army to recruit. This was something the War Office sought to remedy.⁴

The position of the soldier in British society was one of exceptional complexity which, increasingly, was defined by a conflicting combination of social exclusion and cultural significance. Further to the prejudice directed towards the army as an institution and against the individual soldier, there existed a more positive cultural dimension which developed and strengthened towards the end of the nineteenth century. David French has identified this contradiction:

The Regular Army inhabited a paradoxical position. On the one hand the flesh-and-blood rank-and-file soldiers were shunned by much of “respectable society”... On the other hand the soldier in the abstract had become an icon held in growing public esteem. His character was construed as being loyal, patriotic, brave and therefore virtuous.⁵

The military and the soldier are regular and identifiable themes in domestic popular culture. There developed around the British Army a ‘powerful iconography’ and the promotion of the military as a political and cultural expression of national pride gained increasing potency.⁶

Research into popular imperialist culture in Britain in particular has highlighted this aspect of the army’s presence at home in the closing decades of the Victorian period.

John M. MacKenzie has identified the British Army as ‘a central element in national

³ For an overview of the British Army during the late Victorian period see E. M. Spiers ‘The Late Victorian Army 1868 – 1914’ in *Oxford History of the British Army*, ed. by D. Chandler and I. W. F. Beckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.241-262.

⁴ D. French, *Military Identities: the Regimental System, the British Army and the British People c. 1870 – 2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.334.

⁵ French, *Military Identities*, pp.232-233.

⁶ J. M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1986), p.3.

life'.⁷ This new-found cultural significance was not universally held but was demonstrated particularly in expressions of imperialism, for instance, in the music halls and in juvenile adventure literature. There was an increase in interest in the army across late-Victorian society but the trajectory for appetite and consumption was not uniform. It is why such a paradox existed between the glorified soldier of imperialist rhetoric and the socially and culturally shunned soldier of the same period. At what point and for what reason did the glory of the imperialist limelight fail to fall? What can this contradiction in attitudes and sentiments reveal about the British people's relationship with their status as an imperial power and the corresponding duties and responsibilities?

In order to understand fully and rationalise the contradiction of the soldier in late-Victorian society, and by extension the wider British public's relationship with their Empire and the burdens it entailed, it is necessary to fully comprehend the true nature of the soldier in the political, social and cultural terms of his existence. There is an absence in current historical study into the late-Victorian army and imperial British society of research which focusses specifically on the members of the ordinary ranks and their position in that relationship. This thesis will seek to address this current gap in the scholarship, exploring the nature and identity of the soldier in his various guises, from the War Office ideal of the career soldier, the public ideal of the heroic but cost-effective Tommy Atkins to the noble but flawed identity subscribed to by the soldiers themselves.

⁷ J. M. MacKenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, p.3.

HISTORIOGRAPHY I: MILITARY HISTORY

As a sub-discipline military history has expanded greatly over the past fifty years to foster methodologies encompassing the social, political and later cultural context of the British Army. This development has been of particular benefit to scholars of the late-Victorian army. The social significance and impact of armies, soldiers, conflicts and nations have become part of the military historian's remit. A series of three articles on the late-Victorian army by Brian Bond in the early 1960s set the tone for this new approach and provided the groundwork for research into the late-nineteenth century Cardwell Reforms. Bond questions the received assessment of Edward Cardwell's schemes, established by his biographers, encouraging a new body of scholarship, to which this thesis will contribute, to revise the Victorian army in the context of its domestic reorganisation. Bond presents the foundations of the reform period, outlining the impact of Cardwell's schemes, drawing into focus the deficiencies in recruiting and mobilisation and emphasising the ongoing power-struggle between Horse Guards and the War Office.⁸ Moreover, in challenging the Edwardian historiography of the reforms, Bond has highlighted Cardwell's complex legacy in military organisational theory, spawning as it did a devout band of admirers which defined both the British Army's development and stifled greater modification and revision in the interim.⁹

Albert V. Tucker supports Bond's assertion that the pre-1960s assessment of the reforms had been overly positive, praising their intentions without due criticism of their stifling effects. 'Army and Society in England' lays the foundation for such a reassessment of the social impact of Cardwell's reforms, building on Bond's contributions by exploring the late-Victorian army through the social and political energies to which it was

⁸ B. Bond, 'The Late Victorian Army', *History Today*, Vol. 11 No. 9 (September 1961), p.624.

⁹ B. Bond, 'The Effect of the Cardwell Reforms in Army Organisation, 1874 – 1904', *Royal United Service Institute Journal*, Vol. 105 No. 620 (1960), p.524.

exposed. Building on the political background to the reforms, Tucker also considers the social context of the Victorian civil-military relationship, the causes of public antipathy towards military service and reviews the impact of schemes such as short service on recruitment.¹⁰

W. S. Hamer has expanded greatly on the political background of the War Office and the tensions which characterised the working relationship between Horse Guards and the War Office.¹¹ His assessment of the army's political background does not extend to address its social transition nor to the development of the rank-and-file, however, Hamer presents the basis of the War Office organisation and therefore the climate from which social reform of the soldier emerged. The social background to the Victorian army received its due attention with the works of John Keegan, Gwyn Harries-Jenkins and Alan Ramsay Skelley. Keegan's focus on the ideology and social impact of the regiment establishes the role and function of the regimental system and the concept of the regimental family underpinning the social dynamics of the officers and men serving in them. Keegan presents a more positive perspective on the Cardwell Reforms, attributing to the localisation of the regimental system into the English counties the strong identities enjoyed by many of the ordinary line regiments. He acknowledges, and concurs, with Bond's assertion that the reforms were only partially successful overall, but proffers the view that, 'it was this implantation of the British infantry regiment into regional life which helped...the nation's success [in the world wars]...in building up citizen armies on the sketchiest of regular frameworks'.¹²

¹⁰ A. V. Tucker, 'Army and Society in England 1870 – 1900: A Reassessment of the Cardwell Reforms', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 2 No. 2 (May 1963).

¹¹ W. S. Hamer, *British Army: Civil-Military Relations 1885 – 1905* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

¹² J. Keegan, 'Regimental Ideologies', in *War, Economy and the Military Mind*, ed. by G. Best and A. Wheatcroft (London: Croom Helm, 1976), pp.7-11.

A. R. Skelley's seminal examination of the recruitment, terms and conditions of the other ranks constitutes the most thorough study into the social development of the British rank-and-file to date. Through 'extensive and meticulous archival research', Skelley establishes the realities of the living conditions, lifestyle, health and discipline experienced by the private soldier.¹³ Recruitment is also placed under particular focus, defining the recruiting crisis against which the army fought and analysing its causes from public animosity, pay and conditions unfavourable against civilian equivalents. The reforms intended to relieve recruiting difficulties are considered, and assessed through the recruiting patterns which developed thereafter. Conversely, Harries-Jenkins's focus is primarily on the professionalisation and social complexion of the officer corps. However, he also places the army as an institution in the wider social climate of Victorian Britain, highlighting how its soldiers remained, even at home and despite popular parades and mounted ceremonies, 'objects of distant admiration'.¹⁴

Some studies have selected specific aspects of the British Army's history as their focus which have contributed to the depth of scholarship currently in existence. Anthony Bruce, for example, published a short and concise study of the 1871 abolition of the system of officer promotion by purchase. Building on Harries-Jenkins's assessment of the political and social nature of the officer corps, Bruce highlights the necessity for the abolition of purchase before examining the reaction of its advocates and opponents, revealing a great deal about the process from conception to introduction and subsequent defence. Hew Strachan has presented a broader assessment of the political background by positioning the military within the context of the British political system and climate in a study which examines the army from its 1660 origins up to modern times. Strachan

¹³ H. Strachan, 'British Army and Society', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 22 No. 1 (March, 1979), p.248.

¹⁴ G. Harries-Jenkins, *Army in Victorian Society* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1977), p.5.

challenges the notion that the army has always been apolitical, suggesting that in order to serve the nation effectively, military familiarity with the political climate was essential.¹⁵ In the case of the late-Victorian army and the Cardwell-Childers Reforms, Strachan delivers only a fleeting examination. However, he provides a valuable grounding in the wider political and economic context of the reforming era.

Edward Spiers has written extensively on the British Army both throughout the long nineteenth century and during the late-Victorian period specifically.¹⁶ His research constitutes the culmination of the preceding movement among military historians and Victorian specialists towards the social and political study of the army as an institution. *The Late Victorian Army* in particular provides a foundation for the present thesis. In addition to elaborating on the political climate at the War Office, Spiers examines the officer corps and the rank-and-file in terms of enlistment, service and living standards. He highlights the continuing low status of the soldier, despite attempts to improve his reputation, which are attributed to strong discipline, communal living and isolation from families and friends.¹⁷

Furthermore, Spiers develops a cultural approach through his examination of the army in the 'age of imperialism', highlighting the paradox between the low social status of the soldier and his heroic incarnation in imperialist popular culture. Spiers does not venture deeply into the soldier's social and cultural contradictions but does explore the extremes of jingoism alongside the impact of Christian militarism and the mythology which characterised colonial conflicts such as the Zulu wars and Khartoum.¹⁸ Crucially, Spiers establishes a further facet to the field in which this thesis will in part operate by

¹⁵ Strachan, *Politics of the British Army*, pp.277-281.

¹⁶ E. M. Spiers, *Army and Society 1815 – 1914* (London: Longman, 1980).

¹⁷ Spiers, *Late Victorian Army 1868-1902*, p.147.

¹⁸ Spiers, *Late Victorian Army*, p.180-188.

emphasising the possibilities in ‘evaluating [the army’s] utility as an instrument of empire’.¹⁹

Building on Keegan and Spiers, David French has focussed on the social development of the soldier within the regimental system. He explores the life of the rank-and-file from enlistment and training through to barrack conditions and regimental discipline. In his examination of the late-Victorian reforms, French recognises the relevance of the 1881 acts, re-designating the movement as the Cardwell-Childers Reforms. The Childers Reforms now have a solid grounding in historiography; French’s assessment of their introduction forms the foundation upon which this thesis will expand. French also explores further into the army in popular culture and the context of civil-military relations. He highlights the ‘paradox’ of the soldier and illustrates the tensions which existed on Britain’s streets with civilian populations.²⁰ French’s study is broad however, also encompassing the entire twentieth century. He presents considerable scope for further research both into the extent of the Cardwell-Childers Reforms and the social and cultural status of the late-Victorian soldier.

Military history in its current state is a flexible and perspicacious discipline which offers insights not only into the development and nature of the British and world armies, but also potentially a window onto the societies, cultures and political climates from which they were formed. Christopher Brice’s biography of the first Director of Military Intelligence General Sir Henry Brackenbury particularly illustrates this dynamism as he takes military history back to its roots.²¹ In applying a modern approach to a traditional

¹⁹ Spiers, *Late Victorian Army*, p.ix.

²⁰ French, *Military Identities*, p.232.

²¹ C. Brice, *The Thinking Man’s Soldier: the Life and Career of General Sir Henry Brackenbury 1837 – 1914* (Solihull: Helion, 2012).

subject, Brice illustrates how the application of new social and political methodologies may garner fresh perspectives and new ideas.

HISTORIOGRAPHY II: IMPERIAL STUDIES

The British Army and the soldier have enjoyed prominence not only in the realms of military history but also throughout the historiography of Victorian imperialism and popular culture. The British Empire was vast and complex, based upon economic and diplomatic endeavours as much as military ones. However, the British Army and the RN were integral in the maintenance and expansion of that empire. As result, they permeated the culture of imperialism. Freda Harcourt identifies the intrinsic value of the military in late-Victorian imperialism and its relevance to the psyche of the nation, noting, ‘The Empire was the common heritage of all classes and all would be enriched by its extension while exploits by the army or navy could be seen as national endeavours of which all could be equally proud’.²² It is in light of their practical application and cultural significance in the British Empire, that the army and the soldier have entered the discourse of imperial studies.

The subject of this thesis is the ordinary soldier. The rank-and-file were recruited primarily from the working-classes. Therefore, whilst middle and upper-class influence on the development, direction and culture of the Empire is relevant, the army’s presence in Victorian society is particularly vital in terms of imperialism among the lower-classes. In the field of imperial studies, the exploration of the public’s interaction with the Empire at this social level has been developed though the examination of the

²² F. Harcourt, ‘Gladstone, Monarchism and the “New” Imperialism, 1868–1874’ in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 14 No. 1 (1985), p.22.

popular culture it consumed. This avenue of research has been led by MacKenzie. He has highlighted the tendency to explore imperialism amongst the working classes through the lenses of popular culture noting, ‘Imperialism on the domestic scene has been discussed largely as the debate of the elite, while “popular imperialism” has been approached by those more interested in elements of popular culture than imperialism itself’.²³

In MacKenzie’s studies, the military has proven an identifiable presence throughout popular imperialist culture. He draws particular attention to the rise in popularity the military experienced towards the close of the nineteenth century. This new respect for the army, he argues, was cultivated through a fear of aggression from rival European nations. Supplemented by a pre-existing appetite for military spectacle and underpinned by a growing sense of Christian militarism, MacKenzie highlights how the army enjoyed increasing popularity and impact, culturally speaking, at home.

Under the MacKenzie edited *Studies in Imperialism* series, popular culture and imperialism have received a comprehensive examination. *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (1986), presents a collection of articles which deal with the culture of empire in a variety of contexts from the late-Victorian period through to the 1950s.²⁴ Penny Summerfield highlights the potency ‘the soldier’ in working and middle-class culture could achieve in the music halls. Through the working-class melodrama particularly, the military was an effective and popular theme drawing upon the ideas of national

²³ J. M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: the Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880–1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p.2.

²⁴ J. M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

superiority which were ‘seen to derive from the good qualities of the redcoats and bluejackets’.²⁵ Summerfield charts the popularity of military and naval subject matter in the music halls noting that, traditionally, the songs of the music-hall circuits were supportive and celebratory of the soldier but by the 1890s they had acquired even further appeal in bolstering public confidence in the righteousness and strength of the Empire.²⁶

In the same volume, J. A. Mangan explores the use of ideology in state and private schools and the attitudes of the working-classes to the Empire.²⁷ For the most part, Mangan argues, state schooling did not engage in the imperial idea in the same way as the elite, reflecting a more limited interaction with the Empire on the part of the working-classes. Instead, they were encouraged to engage in school institutions geared towards training in the essential artisan skills to produce good servants of the Crown. ‘For many years’, states Mangan, ‘it would seem that the proletariat, while nursing a vague pride in the Empire... were less knowledgeable about its dimensions, nature and extent, and less certain of a personal role in its maintenance and survival.’²⁸ Such a relationship suggests a great deal about working-class reluctance to view the army as a legitimate career.

²⁵ P. Summerfield, ‘Patriotism and Empire: Music-Hall Entertainment 1870 – 1914’, in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. by J. M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p.31.

²⁶ P. Summerfield, ‘Patriotism and Empire’, pp.35–37.

²⁷ See also J. S. Bratton’s ‘Of England Home and Duty: the Image of England in Victorian and Edwardian Juvenile Fiction’ for a study of juvenile adventure literature, a potent source of militarism for the youth of the Empire and an exploration of the early post-feudal social tensions which helped popularise the notion of heroism through military and exploratory endeavours.

²⁸ J. A. Mangan, ‘“The Grit of our Forefathers”: Invented Traditions, Propaganda and Imperialism’, in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. by J. M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p.116.

Popular Imperialism and the Military 1850 – 1950 (1992), following a similar approach to *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, illustrates strongly the closely related nature of the army and imperialism.²⁹ Jeffrey Richards explores specifically the image of the army in juvenile adventure literature whilst Rodger T. Stearn considers the role war correspondents played in bringing knowledge of the colonial campaign to the British public.³⁰ This time, however, there is an intended focus on the military and its representation in the cultural discourse of the period.

In the introduction to *Popular Imperialism and the Military*, MacKenzie discusses the rise in popularity of the soldier through the encouragement of the church, reforms from the state, the appeal of military spectacle and music and the popularity of the Volunteer movement. War and the exertion of national strength became acceptable and embedded in the philosophical, intellectual and cultural trends of John Ruskin and Sir Charles Callwell, he argues, with conflict offering the nation-state the opportunity to ‘come of age’ and consolidate.³¹ Furthermore, MacKenzie identifies how, under the growth of Christian militarism especially, the British soldier acquired a status as ‘the instrument of a moral purpose in the world’ as the army was cast across the globe to perform imperial action endowed with a ‘divinely ordained might’.³² It was an assent which culminated in the experiences of the Second Boer War which finally offered further lessons to counter the enduring conservatism of the Cardwellian army and lack of professionalism in the army’s leadership.³³

²⁹ J. M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Popular Imperialism and the Military 1850 – 1950* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1992).

³⁰ J. Richards, ‘Popular Imperialism and the image of the Army in Juvenile Literature’, pp.80–108; R. T. Stearn, ‘War Correspondents and Colonial War, c.1870–1900’, in *Popular Imperialism and the Military*, ed. by J. M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp.139-161.

³¹ MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military*, pp.1-7.

³² MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military*, p.4.

³³ MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military*, p.20.

Popular Imperialism and the Military embraces the presence of the army in the popular culture of the late-nineteenth century and beyond. Robert Giddings highlights the ingrained place music and the military band occupies in the British public's relationship with its army including and beyond the Victorians.³⁴ The musical theme is continued in Dave Russell's reading of the social and cultural position of the ordinary soldier in Britain.³⁵ Writing on the paradoxical relationship the British public maintained between being enthusiastic about the army culturally yet still recoiling at the notion of military service, Russell notes that 'while scholars are relatively familiar with this rather ambivalent set of attitudes, they are arguably less so with the process that led to their construction'.³⁶ Focussing upon the soldier in the culture of music hall, he explores the extent to which the art forms it encompassed reinforced or challenged social representations of the army, in a similar method to the political, social and cultural perspectives applied within this study.

Popular imperialist culture derived from a multitude of influences which allows for a varied approach to the study of the army in that context. Politics, for instance, constituted a driving force, particularly through the play of international relations and British foreign policy. In her examination of Gladstone's imperialist foreign policy Harcourt demonstrates that the army constituted the point at which political and public opinion converged as Britain chose the military to demonstrate its status as a great

³⁴ R. Giddings, 'Delusive Seduction: Pride, Pomp, Circumstance and Military Music', in *Popular Imperialism and the Military 1850-1950*, ed. by J. M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), pp.25-49.

³⁵ D. Russell, "'We Carved our Way to Glory': The British Soldier in Music Hall Song and Sketch c.1880 – 1914' in MacKenzie (ed.), *Popular Imperialism and the Military 1850–1950*, pp.50-79.

³⁶ Russell, "'We Carved our Way to Glory'", p.51.

world power in Africa in the 1870s.³⁷ Alongside the Abyssinian Expedition and the Zanzibar Mission, the Ashanti War of 1873 is presented as an example of ‘new imperialism’ in practice, an imperialism which was defined by the influence of the public and the press.

The concept of masculinity draws particularly on the relationship between the soldier and imperial culture and society. John Tosh has identified intrinsic links between the psyche of the British public and the military obligations the maintenance of an empire entailed. Tosh argues that the Empire generated both a ‘heightened awareness of opportunities and threats overseas’, and an, ‘enthusiasm for the Empire which was symptomatic of masculine insecurity within Britain’.³⁸ British society encouraged masculinity in order to maintain, protect and enjoy the Empire but, equally, the Empire was presented as a source of ‘unqualified masculinity’ in order to conceal internal discomfort. This reading offers some explanation for the army’s celebrated yet shunned position in society. Fears over losing the Empire by colonial or European competition dogged the late-Victorian psyche. The British male population not being equal to the task of maintaining it caused further consternation.³⁹ In light of such tensions, the army became the subject of conflicting glorification and discomfort, acting as a cultural shield and social reminder over the imperialist state of mind.

Graham Dawson has further asserted that through the growth of popular imperialism, ‘heroic masculinity became fused in an especially potent configuration’ which

³⁷ Harcourt, ‘Gladstone, Monarchism and the “New” Imperialism’, pp.42–44.

³⁸ J. Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Britain: Essays on Gender, Family and Empire* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), pp.193-194.

³⁹ J. Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, pp.196–197.

encouraged the association of manliness with a preparedness to serve, fight and potentially die for Queen, country and empire.⁴⁰ Heather Streets explores the concepts of masculinity and the military in the context of race, examining the ideology of ‘martial races’ and the association the Scottish Highlanders, Punjabi Sikhs and Nepalese Ghurkhas with a predisposition for war.⁴¹ Streets adds several further dimensions to the study of masculinity in light of Victorian imperialism and the military. She explores questions of gender stereotypes in the development of civilian imperial attitudes and the ‘ideological outlook’ of the British Army. Streets offers valuable context for the culture in which the soldier was perceived, in particular in presenting the key role gender and masculinity played in, ‘the development of the logic of imperial defence’ and the Victorian ideals of masculinity it reflected.⁴²

The field of imperial studies often draws its focus and methodologies from several other historical sub-disciplines. Visual culture, as well as print and theatrical culture, offers insight into perceptions of the soldier, his image and identity. J. W. M. Hichberger and Hugh Cunningham have also highlighted the use of art as a means of encouraging unity and compliance from the working-classes through notions of patriotism and loyalty.⁴³ The army, through service or merely spectacle, was an aspect of this manipulation. The ‘aura of glory created around the notion of the empire’, of which it was a part, was encouraged by the press, particularly the popular illustrated journals.⁴⁴ In this context the ruling classes sought to use the image of ‘the soldier’ to mystify and dehumanise the

⁴⁰ G. Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p.1.

⁴¹ H. Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture 1857–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

⁴² Streets, *Martial Races*, p.10.

⁴³ J. M. W. Hichberger, *Images of the Army: the Military in British Art, 1815 – 1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp.77-78; see also, H. Cunningham, ‘The Language of Patriotism’, *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 12, (Autumn 1981), p.24.

⁴⁴ Hichberger, *Images of the Army*, p.78.

men, distancing him from the class of man which composed its ranks and reconstructing the soldier as a bold imperial warrior.

The rise of organised sport in England and the United Kingdom and service sport in the army presents further means by which military appeal and connections with the civilian population may be observed. Tony Mason and Eliza Riedi chart the rise of service sport and its impact on civil-military relations. Highlighting its encouragement following the Cardwell-Childers Reforms to aid in the raising of the soldier's social status, Mason and Riedi identify sport as an integral part of the social integration of the army during the period. At a regimental level, soldiers were actively encouraged to participate in sport alongside civilians, with the Royal Engineers even competing in the FA Cup at Chatham in 1883-4.⁴⁵ Mason and Riedi assert that the quantity of sport played was considerably greater than originally believed, a fact which has some bearing on the nature of the soldier's interaction with the civilian world.⁴⁶

HISTORIOGRAPHY III: LITERARY CRITICISM

The prevalence of printed material central to the examination of popular imperialist culture has also encouraged the extension of research into disciplines beyond history, in particular into the realms of English literature and literary criticism. Andrew Rutherford highlighted in 1989 the absence of the soldier in Victorian literature, a position which reflected a state of wider social exclusion.⁴⁷ John Peck has produced a particularly detailed examination of the army and war in Victorian literature, dissecting popular

⁴⁵ T. Mason and E. Riedi, *Sport and the Military: the British Armed Forces 1880–1960* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.146.

⁴⁶ Mason and Riedi, *Sport and the Military*, p.253.

⁴⁷ A. Rutherford, *Literature of War: Studies in Heroic Virtue* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1989), p.12.

works by Dickens and Tennyson and considering themes such as the army at home and in Victorian life in the context of, or in absence from, those literary vehicles.⁴⁸ Grounded extensively in historiographical analysis of the late-Victorian army, Peck analyses the changing way in which the soldier was represented in nineteenth century literature and the place the army as an institution appeared to occupy in contemporary society.

The influence of literary criticism on the historiography of the British Army in the late-nineteenth century is particularly marked in terms of the impact and application of the works of Rudyard Kipling. The *Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling* (2011) presents a comprehensive study of the works of Kipling, drawing out his criticism in response to the public treatment of the soldier and the image of the soldier he himself wished to communicate.⁴⁹ Robert Hampson's examination of *The Light that Failed* (1891) identifies Kipling's celebration of the military world and the criticism of the civilian one as the protagonist expresses a desire to see 'a few thousand civilians...scattered amongst the rocks of the desert with the soldiers'.⁵⁰ Research into Kipling can highlight the tensions which existed between supporters of the military and the British society at large. Noting how Kipling set out to 'entertain and inform his readers' about the realities of life as a soldier, David Bradshaw further emphasises the feeling with which Kipling opposed the ostracism or denigration of the officers and rank-and-file of the army and its consequences for the men.⁵¹

Steve Attridge's work bridges the focus of the literary scholars with the wider contextualising remit of imperial studies. He assesses the impact of the *Barrack Room*

⁴⁸ J. Peck, *War, the Army and Victorian Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 1998).

⁴⁹ H. J. Booth (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁵⁰ R. Hampson, 'Kipling and the Fin-de-Siecle' in Booth (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling*, p.13.

⁵¹ D. Bradshaw, 'Kipling and War' in Booth (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling*, p.81.

Ballads upon the social and cultural status of the soldier in the context of their public popularity, whilst also considering the relationship the author had with the soldiers themselves.⁵² Attridge's principal focus is on civil-military relations during the Second Boer War and he explores the image of the soldier in contemporary accounts and popular war poetry. In the case of music-hall in particular, Attridge highlights how the soldier could often be singled out either in a derisive sense or for sexual flattery.⁵³ The material Attridge explores is in some respects atypical in that much of it derives from the excitement, anxieties and heightened public awareness caused by the war in South Africa. However, he presents the conflicting cultures and attitudes which characterised the domestic military experience and the paradox of the soldier as a 'hooligan' of the Empire, the embodiment of social degeneration and yet also, through reform and education, potentially the solution.⁵⁴

The press in Britain during the nineteenth century has received comparatively limited attention from scholars. As MacKenzie notes, great limitations are placed on any meaningful interrogation by the vastness of the resource of 34,000 titles and 60 million issues held by the British Library alone.⁵⁵ Increasingly, historians are taking steps to access this source base. To date however, there have been limited numbers of studies to employ the British press specifically as a means of gauging the influence of the military or the Empire in domestic affairs.

⁵² S. Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity in Late Victorian Culture: Civil and Military Worlds* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), pp.70-85.

⁵³ Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity*, p.38.

⁵⁴ Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity*, p.101.

⁵⁵ J. M. MacKenzie, 'The Press and the Dominant Ideology of Empire', in *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the British Empire c.1857-1921*, ed. by S. J. Potter (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), p.24; According to the British Library's web page on its newspaper repository, <http://www.bl.uk/collection-guides/newspapers>, [Accessed: 29/03/2015].

An exceptionally solid theoretical grounding for the use of the press and of literacy and readership trends in Britain during the nineteenth century in historical research has been established over the past fifty years. Led by Richard Altick, scholars have been striving to quantify, catalogue and define the nature of the British newspaper and periodical, establishing the background to the publications themselves and the readerships they commanded, even if the content is yet to be fully explored.⁵⁶ Simon J. Potter's edited volume *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain* is one example of the recent movement to begin utilising this vast resource, exploring how the British public were supplied with information concerning the Empire through the press.⁵⁷ Building on Aled Jones's and J. O. Baylen's historiographical framework around the definition and nature of the nineteenth-century press industry, the newspaper archive is beginning to be mined.⁵⁸

POPULAR CULTURE AND THE PORTER-MACKENZIE DEBATE

The military is never far from the spotlight of imperial studies. It is not the principal component, but it is a frequently recurring subject. This thesis is grounded in military history; the primary focus is the ordinary soldier in Britain. However, the methodologies which investigate the attitudes and perspectives of the British people during the late-nineteenth century developed through imperial studies and studies in popular culture, have greatly influenced this research.

⁵⁶ R. Altick, *English Common Reader: a Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957).

⁵⁷ S. J. Potter (ed.), *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the British Empire c.1857–1921* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004).

⁵⁸ A. Jones, 'Local Journalism in Victorian Popular Culture' in L. Blake, A. Jones and L. Madden (eds.), *Investigating Victorian Journalism* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1990); J. O. Baylen, 'The British Press, 1861-1918', in Griffiths, David (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the British Press 1422 – 1922* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1993).

MacKenzie mentions in his response to Bernard Porter the predilection both historians have for ‘history from below’ and an interest in all the social classes of imperial Britain.⁵⁹ As the recent proliferation of subaltern histories has highlighted, it is difficult to find access to a social group which left little in the way of personal evidence. The rank-and-file of the British Army, ostensibly plucked from the least educated and least socially able of that class, would on the surface offer even less substantiation as to their true nature and existence. However imperial studies, utilising literary criticism and visual culture, can gain an insight on the soldier through representations of him and the role he played in wider society. Kathleen Wilson has praised and encouraged the efforts of postcolonial and cross-disciplinary scholarship in working to recognise alternative modes and sources for understanding the past, to ‘probe the limits of historical knowledge’ and to expose evidence ‘rendered silent or invisible by the historical archive’.⁶⁰

The use of popular culture as a source for historical study can be problematic. Tim Harris has identified some of the difficulties in distinguishing between high and low cultures in the early-modern period and the resultant ambiguity over the nature of truly ‘popular culture’.⁶¹ Much of this debate has persisted into scholarship of the nineteenth century. However, recent work has attempted to dispel the notion of a mass semi-literate populace engaging with the ‘penny dreadful’ contrasted with an elite, literate readership consuming Dickens and Hardy. Championed by Richard Altick, the notion of a ‘common reader’ has gained currency with literary scholars, presenting an image of a

⁵⁹ J. M. MacKenzie, “‘Comfort and Conviction’: A Response to Bernard Porter”, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 36 No. 4 (2008), p.660.

⁶⁰ K. Wilson (ed.), *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660 – 1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.2-5.

⁶¹ T. Harris, ‘Problematizing Popular Culture’ in *Popular Culture in England c.1500–1850*, ed. by T. Harris (London: MacMillan, 1995), p.1.

far more inclusive literary culture with a mass readership of literary works serialised in periodicals.

Every source used in the pursuit of history demands a degree of scepticism and a critical eye. However, the field of imperial studies has felt most acutely the effects of conflicting confidence between historians in their use of sources. This debate has over recent years been robustly contested by MacKenzie and Porter. Stemming from MacKenzie's *Propaganda and Empire* (1984), which inspired Porter's *The Absent Minded Imperialists* (2004), tensions between popular culture and empiricism have emerged. Porter duly credits MacKenzie with introducing scholars to the way 'imperialism consciously impacted on British society at so many levels'.⁶² However, he sought to test MacKenzie's assertions that imperialism was present in the working-class psyche through the permeation of imperialist images and ideology within popular culture. Simply because we can identify imperialism throughout nineteenth century popular culture does not necessarily mean its consumers were imbued with those views; the evidence, Porter argues, does not prove it.⁶³

In his response, MacKenzie highlights the depth of imperialistic material he has uncovered in his research, ranging from the press and the theatre to intellectual discourse such as the public museum.⁶⁴ Porter claims to bring the wider contexts of education, geographical and social locations, genders, mentalities and so forth to the study, however, MacKenzie suggests that the sources themselves require a more than a

⁶² B. Porter, 'Popular Imperialism: Broadening the Context', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 39 No. 5 (2011), p.833.

⁶³ B. Porter, 'An Imperial Nation? Recent Works on the British Empire at Home', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 96 No. 389 (2007), p.228.

⁶⁴ MacKenzie, "'Comfort and Conviction": a Response to Bernard Porter', pp.662-663.

cursory inspection which, when compared to a wide range of other examples, illustrate a potent presence of imperialist rhetoric.

Whilst not proposing to enter into it directly, the MacKenzie-Porter debate has given rise to some interesting questions which have provided added impetus to the research of this thesis. In seeking to gauge the levels at which public engagement with imperialist popular culture translated into genuine investment in and enthusiasm for the Empire, the military may offer a valuable control study. The army occupied a unique position in Britain as a large cultural institution with imperial and non-imperial contexts. Its soldiers were high in cultural currency yet low in social status. While it may not be possible to define how deeply popular imperialism ran in Victorian society, the soldier may offer some contextualisation.

MacKenzie has previously identified a reticence in historians to engage with Britain's imperial past, noting; 'the historians who have written about imperialism have principally been concerned with political, strategic and economic dimensions, with the official mind rather than the popular psychology'.⁶⁵ MacKenzie has demonstrated that it is possible to conduct 'history from below' to identify public and national sentiment through the interrogation of popular culture. Writing of contemporary and early imperial historians such as Hobson and Robinson and Gallagher, MacKenzie notes;

Historians were working from "above", from the point of view of the 'official mind', an elite who expressed either anxieties that an imperial message was not getting over or deprecated forms of imperialism and associated jingoism. Supposing...we abandoned the conventional archive (though not completely) and looked at other forms of historical documents, no less valid as sources...might we come up with a different conclusion?⁶⁶

⁶⁵ J. M. MacKenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, p.2.

⁶⁶ J. M. MacKenzie, "'Comfort" and Conviction', p.661.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The foundation of this thesis lies in the presentation of three distinct perspectives on ‘the soldier’ as a concept and an identity, in order to examine the extent to which each perspective confirms, disproves or adds complexity to the others. These perspectives define the three sections of this thesis which are as follows: the War Office Perspective, examining the political movement towards reform and public re-engagement with the army; the Public Perspective, which will explore social and cultural attitudes to, and receptions of, the army; and the Soldiers’ Perspective, which will consider the socio-military expressions of identity from the ordinary ranks.

There are a series of over-arching research questions which inform the primary research objectives and which address the underlying drive of this study: the nature, development and position of the late-Victorian soldier. Where, between the two representations as an imperial hero and a domestic outcast, is the most accurate position to locate the soldier? As closer examinations of the army through these three perspectives is conducted, it will also be valuable to ascertain from which quarters and to what extent the impetus for change came. Did the War Office promote a positive reception for the soldier in the public arena and did any alterations and evolutions in attitudes have alternative root causes? Did the three bases of influence – military, political and public – complement and advance one another and how far did they operate independently? Did they check or damage the integration and popularisation of the soldier in any way?

With the establishment of these three bases of influence as the foundation for the study, the following are the central research questions which, though inter-connected, will inform the research in the specific sections. What did the state wish for the British

Army and what might that suggest about the socio-military framework of imperial Britain? (Section I) How did the British public perceive the soldier and what expectations were there of him? (Section II) And what might the soldier reveal about himself; would an internal insight alter or illuminate perspectives gained from civilian social and cultural perceptions? (Section III)

In light of these fundamental points, this thesis will address a further series of questions in relation to each of the three sections. Section I relates to the role of the Government, through the War Office, in inducing change in the nature of the soldier and encouraging the popularisation of the army in wider society. It is already established that, through the schemes known collectively as the Cardwell-Childers Reforms, the popularisation of the army was sought. Primarily, this was through the strengthening of relations between the civilian world and the military in the form of localised regiments, the reform of military service and the means by which the army penetrated civilian life, particularly by way of recruiting. How far did the War Office engage with public perceptions of the nature of the rank-and-file and how far were the reforms enacted to popularise the army? Did economic and strategic concerns, if at all, influence or even dominate the War Office's activity or were the two mutually exclusive?

Given the prevalence of the recruiting crisis in the War Office's thinking, it seems likely that there was, to some extent, a desire to influence a fundamental change in the way in which the public viewed military service. However, was it the War Office's intention to change the nature of the soldier or simply to alter the public understanding of the nature of military service? If there was a deliberate intention to change the nature of the soldier, what manner of change were they hoping to achieve? In order to address these

research questions effectively, it will be necessary to consider in Section I the methods by which the War Office sought to achieve their objectives. How did the War Office shape or direct the changes in the nature of the soldier and military service, both publicly and internally? And did the reforms introduced in the 1870s and 1880s contain a dual impetus, a primary focus on recruiting and an intended secondary impact on the soldier?

The second section of this thesis concerns the public perception of the soldier, as a result of, and further to, the movement towards reform at the War Office. In many respects this section will act as a litmus test for the first, exploring how the British public received the reforms and the extent to which a change in the civilian perception of the military was encouraged. Was there a willingness to accept and buy into the changes being enacted upon the army and to review existing prejudices as a result? More broadly, Section II will also seek to ascertain how public perceptions of the soldier changed during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. Can any sense of a transition be gleaned and if so, what was the driving force behind that development; was there any influence beyond that emanating from the War Office? Moreover, Section II will consider whether or not the notion of the soldier as a social reject is accurate. How was the soldier portrayed in the press and in literature and do these sources reflect the attitudes of the general public who consumed them? Finally, what was the public image and identity of the soldier; to what extent was it at odds with, or did it speak to, the War Office ideal?

Section III will, to an extent, seek to interrogate its two predecessors, presenting a comparison and source of context for the attitudes and ideas explored in both the public

and political bases. In comparison to the public idea of and the government ideal for the soldier, who was Tommy Atkins to himself and his comrades? Does the inward reflection confirm, disprove or alter the external? Essentially, Section III will seek to question how far the idea of the soldier was a universal concept. Did some individuals conform and others not? Were all soldiers of the other ranks the same or how far did they differ? More specifically, it will be interesting to consider how the reforms were received by the subjects of the War Office's plans. Do they vindicate them or highlight where the War Office was in error? Also, how did the soldier perceive the civilian? Was there anger or resentment at his treatment in public and was he even aware of the public's disapproval? Finally, Section III will further question how and how far the identity and presence of the late-Victorian soldier changed during the period of this study.

METHODOLOGIES

This thesis is an interdisciplinary study which draws on research methodologies developed by a variety of disciplines including imperial studies and military history, visual culture and literary criticism. Section I employs a military history methodology, reflecting the origins of this research. Past studies into the subject of the British Army in the late-nineteenth century have established a strong methodology which has influenced research for this thesis. Brian Bond and Alan Ramsay Skelley in the 1960s and 1970s assisted in the establishment of the organisation of the army as a legitimate facet of military history, moving beyond traditional focuses on campaign and regimental histories. Bond's 1961 article 'The Late Victorian Army' in *History Today* was one of a

series of pieces which presented the army in the context of its social dislocation.⁶⁷ Building on Bond's research, Skelley's seminal *The Victorian Army at Home* broke the confines of military history presenting a detailed and dedicated social examination of the other ranks in the context of the army's domestic organisation.⁶⁸

This research will build on those military history methodologies in its examination of the movement towards reform of the 1870s, 1880s and early 1890s. The organisation and management of the army will be considered from the perspective of the War Office's struggle to maintain the regiments to their establishment and the activity which was engaged in as a result, primarily in relation to recruitment and the development of public relations. The work of Spiers and French provides a solid foundation upon which to base further enquiry into the nature and development of the late-Victorian soldier.

In the majority of studies concerning the late-Victorian army the Cardwell Reforms provide the starting point from which investigation progresses. This is a logical and arguably inevitable format for any study exploring the British Army and the British soldier between 1870 and 1899. Spiers identifies the Cardwell Reforms as 'the outcome of an immense political undertaking [which] established the parameters in which the army would operate for the remainder of the century'.⁶⁹ This thesis will expand upon and develop the established methodology employed in previous studies. It will engage in greater depth and detail with the development of the theories of reform at the War Office and the underlying debate which, directed by a series of investigatory commissions, influenced the movement to reform.

⁶⁷ Bond, 'Late Victorian Army', pp.616-614. See also Tucker, 'Army and Society in England, p.110-141.

⁶⁸ Skelley, *Victorian Army at Home*.

⁶⁹ Spiers, *Late Victorian Army*, p.2.

Further to influences from military history, this study will seek to present new perspectives and angles on the soldier by employing methodologies from other disciplines. Section II takes the most drastic departure from the initial military history methodology. The research developed in the field of imperial studies and English literature is central to chapters 4, 5 and 6 as the focus of the research shifts from War Office debate to the public perspective through popular and visual culture and literature. This is a departure from a methodology which deals principally with manuscript and official sources from the War Office and other Government departments involved in the progress of military reform.

Imperial studies as a sub-discipline has established a varied, expansive and effective methodology through which to explore the British public's relationship with their empire, the strength of which continues to be tested by the MacKenzie-Porter debate. This thesis will employ aspects of this methodology through its use of newspapers and periodical cartoons in chapters 4 and 5 to examine reception of the soldier in light of the War Office reforms and also the cultural climate of which he was the subject. This will enable an assessment of the soldier's position in British society and popular culture to be formed independently of War Office interpretations. This approach will highlight key concerns and motivations in the civilian perspective on the army adding context to the observation of the military authorities.

Section II focuses on the soldier in print. Continuing with a methodology which applies popular culture as a glass through which to observe contemporary social and cultural

perceptions, Chapter 6 explores the concept of the soldier in late-Victorian novels and poetry. This approach is influenced by the methodologies of literary criticism generally and by Peck's exploration of the representation of the army's self-perception, adaption or resistance to social and technological change in literature.⁷⁰ Interpretations of the literary representations will be informed by existing military history scholarship on the social status of the Victorian army: a defining feature of Peck's study. The three authors and poets examined in this thesis are Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling and Alfred Edward Housman. The selections reflect Kipling's direct impact on the position of the soldier, and the representations of military men in civil society presented to a non-specific non-imperialist or militarist audience in the case of Hardy and Housman.

Section III explores the rank-and-file themselves from an internal socio-military perspective. A study of the social history of the army through sources of cultural expression in print, it employs an amalgamation of military history and imperial studies methodologies. The section is based around the views and experiences presented through the service newspaper the *Broad Arrow* and surviving published and manuscript military diaries and memoirs. The soldiers' perspective is examined as a means by which to challenge the impression of the soldier's social status developed in the previous chapters.

SCOPE AND SOURCES

The chronological confines of this thesis are 1868, the beginning of the first reform period at the War Office under Edward Cardwell, and concluding prior to the outbreak

⁷⁰ Peck, *War, the Army and Victorian Literature*.

of the South African or Second Boer War. 1899 is a boundary for this study principally because of the impact the war exerted upon the civilian relationship with the army. It was the first major test of the Cardwell-Childers Reforms but more importantly, the elevated wartime enlistment which took place constitutes the first significant physical deconstruction of the barrier between civilian and soldier prior to the Great War. The familiarity which arose from the swelling of the ranks created a temporary rise in the status of the soldier which was, to an extent, independent of the developments explored in this thesis.

A further distinction is the focus on the ordinary soldier of the English line infantry regiment. Not only were they the most numerous, the English infantry regiments faced the greatest difficulty in recruiting and required the most extensive social reform. The elite Cavalry, Guards, Royal Engineers and Royal Artillery regiments enjoyed a higher level of prestige and struggled to recruit to a lesser extent. The Scottish, Welsh and Irish regiments also enjoyed a healthier, though by no means ideal, relationship with those populations and in the case of the Scots regiments in particular, a level of prestige identified by Streets and MacKenzie, shielded the soldier to a degree from the strongest prejudices suffered by the English ranker. This is not a hard-and-fast distinction however; the British Army as a whole experienced a social and cultural transition which cannot be distilled from that of the English line regiments. However, in the case of the War Office reforms in particular, the English infantryman was the principal subject. Furthermore, with this study seeking to present the social development of the soldier in Britain, the research focus is restricted to source material describing the soldier's experiences in Britain.

This study employs a broad range of source material pertaining to the late-Victorian army and soldier, deriving from political, social and cultural backgrounds. Materials traditionally referenced in military histories, such as War Office memoranda and committee reports, provide the basis for the forthcoming examination of the role the War Office performed in encouraging the soldier's social rehabilitation. For example, reports compiled by four royal commissions, namely Taylor (1875), Armstrong (1878), Airey (1879) and Wantage (1891), which were appointed to assess the status of the reform process are examined for the first time as a continuous dialogue.

Considering the impact of the reforms upon public perceptions of the military and the soldier in print, further to the works of Hardy, Kipling and Housman, forty-seven London and local newspaper and periodical publications form the primary source base for chapters 4 and 5. Drawing on combined qualitative and quantitative approaches, the large database of the British Library's Nineteenth Century British Newspapers has been examined using modern Gale-Cengage Learning search engine technology.⁷¹ The newspaper as a source is also examined in reference to the military perspective, through the *Broad Arrow*, a specialist newspaper published for, and on, the RN and British Army, which provides an insight into the perspective of the army institution and its personnel in light of the discourse established in the preceding chapters.

⁷¹ In line with quantitative methodologies, the refinement of the vast database of Victorian newspapers forms a key method in this research. However, the interrogation of the data, having been refined through sampling by year and search-term filters to comprise in the region of 1,800 articles, is conducted by way of a qualitative approach. Broad trends in opinion and public concern relating to the army, the reforms and the soldier in Britain are exposed through the content of individual articles rather than a reliance on statistical interpretations. For the Gale-Cengage Learning Nineteenth Century British Newspapers online database see:

<http://find.galegroup.com/bncn/start.do?prodId=BNCN&userGroupName=plymouth&finalAuth=true;>

For the Gale-Cengage Learning Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals online database see:

[http://find.galegroup.com/ukpc/start.do?prodId=NCUK&userGroupName=plymouth.](http://find.galegroup.com/ukpc/start.do?prodId=NCUK&userGroupName=plymouth)

The final sources examined in this study are memoirs and diaries written by serving and veteran soldiers during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The memoirs - twenty in total - offer a further perspective proffered by the soldiers themselves on the realities of the military existence, providing context for the perspectives acquired from the War Office and the Public. Some diaries are also referenced, although surviving examples have tended to recount only overseas service and therefore do not conform to the confines of this thesis.

CONCLUSION

The late-Victorian army has benefited from progressive and expanding scholarship over recent years which has encouraged new studies to complement and build upon their predecessors' findings, constructing an ever-more illuminating picture. This thesis looks to follow the trend set by scholars of military history and imperial studies and apply to the discipline a variety in approaches and interests which further enhance our understanding of the nineteenth century military. The fundamentals of the late-Victorian army have been well established. What is still lacking is the wider context. As an institution, there are solid historiographical foundations. Further research is required, however, if the composite parts of the army organisation are to be fully comprehended. The ordinary soldier is a prime example.

The terms and conditions under which the rank-and-file lived are moderately well-known. The nature of 'the soldier', as an individual and as part of a collective, is less distinct. There were several influences which sought to alter, create or preserve an ideal of the soldier, the nature of which have not yet been established. This thesis will begin to address these limits. The evolving relationship between the soldier and the British

public, from an inhuman military tool to the very embodiment of the army and British might, as it was conveyed in the contemporary discourse of the press will be presented.

The objective of this study is to distil the various identities of the soldier. Further to the public concept of 'Tommy Atkins', the soldier of the War Office will also be examined, revealing the movement to manipulate public and military perceptions alike to embody an idea of the soldier sufficiently appealing to remedy the army's recruiting problems. Finally the soldier will be afforded a direct spotlight presenting the individual and collective as they considered themselves to be, both in line with, or contrary to, the public and War Office ideal.

By applying the three core perspectives of this thesis, it will be demonstrated that the soldier, through political manipulation and cultural trend, became a hero in the civilian's imagination and villain on his streets. It will prove that though a somewhat out-of-touch institution, the War Office and Horse Guards attempted to engage with the wider social progression towards professionalism and modernisation which in some respects was years ahead of its time. Furthermore, what follows will demonstrate that the rank-and-file were politically aware and engaged with the social constraints of their reputation, supporting and denouncing in equal measure attempts at their 'improvement'. For the British public, it will become apparent that though socially attitudes towards the soldier were ambiguous, civil-military relations were in a fluid state which shifted considerably, particularly once the soldier's presence was actually acknowledged.

**SECTION I:
THE WAR OFFICE PERSPECTIVE**

CHAPTER ONE

THE REFORMS BEGIN:

EDWARD CARDWELL, RADICAL REFORM AND ROYAL COMMISSIONS 1868 – 1879

INTRODUCTION

The British soldier, or ‘Tommy Atkins’, was subject to considerable change throughout the late-nineteenth century in the United Kingdom. The rank-and-file of the British Army passed from relative social anonymity to acquire a cultural significance which transformed the presence of the soldier in British society. The source of this change may be framed within three central spheres, public, military and political. Section I will focus on the latter of those categories, and examine the political influence which helped shape the social evolution of the British soldier. Beginning with the reforms of Edward Cardwell in the early 1870s, this section will trace their impact on the popularisation the ordinary soldier in Britain. Chapter 1 will examine the Cardwell Reforms (1870-1874), with focus on the Army Enlistment Act (1870) and Localisation Acts (1872-3) and the impact they had on the position of the regiment and the soldier in late-Victorian society.

The Cardwell Reforms have been described by Brian Bond as a ‘belated response to the glaring deficiencies in the organisation of the British Army’¹ They came as a top-down attempt to render the military suitable for both its colonial and potentially continental duties. The schemes affected every strata of the military organisation. The balance of power between the political heads at the War Office and the military chiefs at Horse Guards was shifted in favour of the Secretary of State for War.² The officer corps was moved closer to a meritocratic system with the abolition of the purchase system. And

¹ Bond, ‘Effect of the Cardwell Reforms in Army Organisation, p.515.

² Hamer, *Civil-Military Relations*, p.ix.

the rank-and-file saw their terms and conditions reviewed. As a result, the majority of scholars considering their introduction and impact have done so on a general and broad basis. The purpose of this chapter is to approach them with a greater degree of focus on the debate which succeeded them, leading to the second wave of reforms in 1881 and which championed the social rehabilitation of the ordinary soldier. It will identify the political impetus behind the rehabilitation of the private and non-commissioned Officer (NCO), intended or incidental. By applying this focus on the implications certain schemes had for the ordinary soldier, this research will present a new perspective on the development of the late-Victorian soldier and highlight a network of discussions and theories hitherto overlooked or dismissed in favour of a more general approach.

While historians have afforded a suitable level of attention to the War Office's concern for the reputation of the soldier, they have not yet sufficiently located them in the wider social and cultural climate. The popularisation of the army was born of a necessity to increase the quantity and quality of recruiting. What this research will demonstrate is the wider importance this approach had on the development of the soldier. The rehabilitation of Tommy Atkins was to require a retrospective and forward-looking approach as long-held prejudices were dispelled and new-found enthusiasm for the soldier was to be encouraged. In part establishing a foundation for the forthcoming sections to explore the public and soldiers' perspectives, the impetus for change led by the War Office will be examined in Section I, outlining the official and political drive behind the popularisation of the soldier in Britain.

THE WAR OFFICE AND THE RECRUITING CRISIS

By 1868, the British Army had drawn consistent criticism since the scandals of the Crimean War for the outdated and inefficient method of its organisation and the high expense it entailed. The Army and Navy estimates were greater than all other Government departments combined. Reform was needed to address issues at every level. One of the greatest difficulties the War Office sought to tackle was the perpetual crisis in recruiting for the rank-and-file. Wastage of manpower alone incurred considerable burdens. In 1868, the year Cardwell became Secretary of State for War, 22,535 men were lost from a strength of 172,014. Of these, 16,419 had been discharged, 2,685 had died and 3,431 had deserted.³ Described by Spiers as a ‘perennial problem’, the army met the establishment or strength voted for it by parliament on only three occasions in a sample of nine years between 1868 and 1898.⁴ The strains of waste were exacerbated by the unpredictable nature of the army’s principal role as a colonial police force which could impose periodic spikes in military activity overseas. The long-term retrenchment of the mid-fifties following the Crimean War and Indian Rebellion lasted throughout the 1860s and precipitated a steady decline in the size of the Regular Army.⁵

The guarantee that recruiting would be a perpetual problem lay in the army’s reliance upon volunteers, rather than conscription. Unlike the great continental armies of Prussia and France, the British Army was compelled to compete in the labour market in order to acquire fresh men. Conscription in the United Kingdom was considered a ‘politically and socially unacceptable’ infringement on civil liberties.⁶ It is in this context that the social status of the soldier acquired significance for the politicians and officers at the

³ Spiers, *Late Victorian Army*, p.120.

⁴ Spiers, *Late Victorian Army*, pp.119-121.

⁵ Bond, ‘Effect of the Cardwell Reforms’, p.515.

⁶ Brice, *Thinking Man’s Soldier*, p.22.

War Office. If the army were to acquire soldiers to populate its ranks, it would have to compete with other employers of manual and unskilled labourers to do so, or be forced to plumb the depths of the working-classes. This, it was traditionally believed, was precisely what the army did.

Prejudice against soldiers in the late-1860s and early-1870s was innate, stemming from decades in which enlistment into the army required desperation on the part of the recruit suggesting that only those who failed in civil life would choose the army for a career. Once enlisted, the soldier was removed from society and confined largely to his new family, the regiment. The low opinion the public at large held of the soldier was not without foundation. The presence of 'bad character' in the army was a fundamental concern for the War Office as it undertook its reforms under Cardwell. The belief that soldiers were socially undesirable was encouraged by the knowledge that the army actively employed transgressive men and did not actively discharge those found to have seriously transgressed. It had long been established that in the army men of good character might be permitted to purchase their discharge early. Men of bad character however, rather than being dishonourably discharged, were retained and subject to brutal corporal punishment. The army ensured its ranks were filled not by the cordial retention of good men but by the forced retention of bad ones. Furthermore, the prejudice that soldiers were criminally inclined was somewhat vindicated by the occasional practice by magistrates to offer pardons to criminals in return for their enlisting.

The tavern was a particular source of negative association with the soldier for many civilian communities in Britain. The use of public houses as bases from which to recruit, and the practice of some disreputable recruiters to target inebriated men (often assisting

in their inebriation) had created a dark and foreboding element to the presence of the army in towns and villages.⁷ Furthermore, the policy of billeting troops in local taverns and hostelries had fostered resentment against the army for centuries. It was felt that the presence of troops was an imposition on local communities. As several soldiers recall with frustration in their memoirs (examined in chapters 8 and 9), the outrageously diminutive sum proffered by the Government of 10d for a hot meal and a bed at a tavern or inn often fuelled mistreatment by the landlord. This in turn encouraged bad behaviour from the men in retaliation.⁸ The situation was prone to spiral. Interaction with soldiers was discouraged among civilians over fears for their behaviour. This only added to the isolation and frustration which encouraged the soldiers' attitudes to worsen further still.

The British working class disinclination to enlist also had a more pragmatic root however. Prejudices against the presence of the military in towns and stereotypes of the soldier as a socially transgressive individual certainly contributed to the unpopularity of military service. However, the fact also remained that the army consistently failed to compete in the labour market with civilian employers. To enlist in the army in 1868, a man could expect to receive 1s 2d per day as a basic rate in the infantry. That rate had recently been raised 2d and there was a further 1d per day allocated for beer. In comparison, the unskilled urban labourer received in the region of 22s 3d per week in 1867.⁹ Stoppages for rations, clothing and other essentials further diminished the soldier's pay and created added resentment among the ranks. Low remuneration indicated low worth and compounded the perception that to enlist as a soldier reflected failure and social rejection.

⁷ Spiers, *Late Victorian Army*, p.124.

⁸ H. E. Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar* (London: Cassell & Co., 1893), pp.63-64.

⁹ Spiers, *Late Victorian Army*, p.133.

This is not to suggest that no one in the working classes was willing to enlist; in 1868, 17,060 men joined the Regular Army.¹⁰ But the War Office faced the pressures of annually balancing the army's intake, wastage and overall manpower capacity. Furthermore, there was an ongoing desire to raise the quality of the men enlisting as well as their quantity. The aim was to appeal to 'respectable' working class men, healthy, suited to the physical nature of military service and mentally capable to operate at the required efficiency. As recruiting levels peaked and troughed, so too did the physical attributes of the intake. Following two fruitful recruiting years, a specification of five feet six inches was established as a minimum in May 1869; the following year it was lowered to five feet four inches following a recruiting lull.¹¹ As the report of Lord Airey's Committee would later highlight, this figure would rise for the remainder of the decade, as short service drew in greater numbers of men.¹² If the army wished to maintain itself to establishment, the War Office was compelled to address the issues affecting the public's attitude towards the soldier and his career. It was unwilling to raise the soldiers pay and conscription, unlike many European nations, was also not an option thanks to the engrained and deep-rooted opposition of the British to standing armies.

CARDWELL ENTERS THE WAR OFFICE

In December 1868 the Liberal Party under William Gladstone entered government. Gladstone's first administration, a period often referred to as the 'high tide of Liberalism', was later to be regarded as one of the great reforming ministries of

¹⁰ Spiers, *Late Victorian Army*, p.120.

¹¹ Spiers, *Late Victorian Army*, p.122.

¹² House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (Hereafter HCPP): *Army Reorganisation: Report of a Committee of General and Other Officers of the Army on Army Organisation*, 1881 [c.2791], 87.165-172, p.32.

nineteenth century Britain. Following the Prime Minister's principles of 'peace, retrenchment and reform', the Liberal government proceeded to introduce a catalogue of major reforms intended to address a wide range of social and political agendas. The Education Act of 1870 for instance, established the formal organisation of elementary schools. There were also reforms to the Trade Unions (1871), alcohol licencing laws (1872), the Civil Service (1871) and elections (1872) as well as the judicial system (1873).¹³ It was in the reforming culture of Gladstone's first Liberal administration that the British Army began in earnest its own period of change, characterised by vigorous reform, shadowed by financial retrenchment and geared towards insuring for peace by being ready for war.

Cardwell was appointed by Gladstone as Secretary of State for War on 4th December 1868. He was not Gladstone's first choice for the post but the preferred Lord Hartington had lost his seat at his constituency in North Lancashire. Nevertheless, Cardwell possessed some knowledge of the army and more importantly was a good economist and administrator who to date, had not expressed views unpopular with the Queen.¹⁴ He did not set out with the welfare and social betterment of the soldier as his principal concern however. The administration of the army and the benefits of a Board of the Admiralty style system of governing were of primary interest to the new War Secretary when he took office. Cardwell's argument for increasing the efficiency of the military system was contingent on reducing expenditure on the army, an aim which was to underpin the majority of his efforts at the War Office.¹⁵ As Brice has argued, the Liberal

¹³ M. Lynch, *An Introduction to Nineteenth Century British History 1800-1914* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999), pp.66-67.

¹⁴ B. Bond, 'Cardwell, Edward, first Viscount Cardwell (1813–1886)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4620, accessed 21.Sept.2012]).

¹⁵ R. Biddulph, General Sir, *Lord Cardwell at the War Office: A History of his Administration 1868-1874* (London, John Murray, 1904), p.17.

Government's intention was not to revolutionise the army's fighting capabilities, but to improve its efficiency and reduce costs.¹⁶ The reforms Cardwell was to introduce would face numerous counts of bitter and obstructive opposition which required considerable tenacity, perseverance and willpower – attributes Cardwell possessed and challenges he for the most part overcame.

Cardwell entered the War Office with, as he put it, a 'formidable array of questions' which he felt the Liberal Government needed to address in relation to the British Army. The minister summarised in three points the range of issues he felt the debate would encompass. In addition to reducing the army estimates he listed the following subjects:

1. Appointment and promotion of officers, involving purchase, seniority, selection, military colleges and examinations, and the relation of highly-educated officers to those who may be promoted from the ranks.
2. Recruiting; and this will raise the question whether service is to be for a long or short period; whether there will not be a very considerable change in the proportionate numbers of men serving in the Colonies and of those serving at home – with a special provision for India – whether after a short service in the first army, the soldier shall not pass into a second army, with graduations to the mere militia, etc., and the interconnection of all services.
3. What inducements shall be held out in the way of
 - 1) Civil Employment
 - 2) Retirement, etc., etc., for officers and men: and herewith the great question whether distinction between the Guards and the Line is to be preserved; and if so, whether the *Corps d'elite* shall not be a means of stimulating energetic service throughout the whole army, and of retaining for a longer period of service the men thought worthy of being selected for that corps.¹⁷

Cardwell enjoyed some success in addressing and modifying the majority of the issues he outlined in his memorandum of December 1868. His reforms streamlined and rationalised the organisation of the War Office by combining the conflicting political and crown heads of the army in the Secretary of State for War and the Commander-in-

¹⁶ Brice, *Thinking Man's Soldier*, p.22.

¹⁷ E. Cardwell, 'The Army', in Biddulph, *Lord Cardwell at the War Office*, pp. 253-254.

Chief. The abolition of the purchase system was also successful in reaching fruition as it was passed under the Regulation of the Forces Act on 1st November 1871. There was, inevitably, a backlash from many in the officer corps. A great deal of debate ensued over the refund of serving officers for the commissions they had purchased, which were often intended as investments. Cardwell and the War Office resisted the calls for a review. Instead they claimed that several officers had benefitted from the abolition before adding that there were official channels for complaint and that until that method had been exhausted no further lines of enquiry were needed.¹⁸

THE ARMY ENLISTMENT ACT AND THE LOCALISATION ACTS

The Army Enlistment Act (1870) and the Localisation Acts (1872-73) were the two principal reforms aimed at the other ranks. Within their rationale there were administrative, strategic and social objectives which would affect the nature of the soldier and the regimental system of which he was a member. The first major step, the Army Enlistment Act of 1870, was aimed at the terms of service of the rank-and-file. It introduced the option of 'short service' as a means by which young men could enjoy a limited spell of six years with the Colours. They would then return to civilian life as a trained Reservist for a further seven years ready to bolster the Regular Army in case of major war with only limited refresher training. The formation of a reserve force, which soon numbered in the region of 80,000 men, was a considerable achievement for the War Office.¹⁹ It would ensure that, in the event of major war, supplemented by the Militia and Volunteers, Britain could mobilise and field a sizable force in relatively rapid time.

¹⁸ A. Bruce, *Purchase System in the British Army 1660 – 1871* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1980).

¹⁹ The National Archives (Hereafter TNA): WO 33/22: R. Airey, Adjutant General, *Report on Army Reorganisation*, (1871), p.4.

The short-service scheme was followed by the Localisation Act in April 1872 and General Order 32 in July 1873. They sought to restructure the existing regimental system to enable the army to support and maintain its campaigns abroad whilst being capable of rapid expansion in the event of a European crisis. In order to aid the transition between gathering raw recruits and supplying the regiments on active service abroad, Cardwell linked line infantry regiments together, re-designating them battalions. One regiment would remain in the UK and actively recruit and train reinforcements - in the vicinity of the recruiting district based at newly formed regimental depots – and supply the sister battalion abroad. To improve the efficiency and military effectiveness of the amateur forces also, Cardwell directed that training for the Militia and Volunteers be conducted by regular army instructors at the regimental depot under the localisation scheme.²⁰

These reforms sought to address major concerns over the inefficiencies of the army's outdated system of reinforcement, global and domestic, and the organisation of the regimental system. Considering the financial and strategic restraints within which Cardwell was working their introduction was considered a necessity. Despite the strong political inclination towards efficiency and retrenchment, there was also a social angle to the reforms. They were intended to modernise and improve the status of the soldier as well. During a speech he gave in 1871 on the subject of conscription, Cardwell stated that:

There are moral qualities developed in the training of a recruit which springing as it were from the army as a source, permeate through the

²⁰ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.34.

lower strata of society, and add largely to those qualities which make up the greatness of a nation.²¹

Cardwell hoped that a greater level of interaction between the civilian and military worlds would break down some of the social barriers which separated them so decisively and encourage the diffusion of some of the more desirable qualities of the military into civilian life. He also hoped that, from a practical perspective, raising the social status of the soldier would improve recruiting. A higher class of man, particularly from the agricultural populations, would enlist improving the moral and operational health of the army while likewise allowing some of the qualities most valued in the military man to benefit society.

The Army Enlistment Act therefore was intended to popularise the army among the recruit-giving classes. Enlistment in the army prior to the 1870 Enlistment Act was for a period of 12 or 21 years. With the majority of the time served abroad, it amounted to colonial exile. A short service period of six years was created as an alternative contract. In addition to this, the number of soldiers serving over-seas was lowered by reducing the colonial garrisons by more than 25,000 men thus allowing soldiers a greater period of home service.²² The short-service soldier had the option, should he be deemed to have shown good character and conduct during his initial service, to extend his time with the colours ultimately to the full twenty-one years and then be eligible to claim a pension. The option of a less permanent means of serving with the army was intended to render it a more attractive prospect to stable young men seeking employment.

²¹ A. Cunningham-Robertson, Colonel, 'Notes on Mr Cardwell's Speech and Suggestions for the Debates which are to Follow.' in *Blackwood's Magazine* (London, Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1871), p.1.

²² French, *Military Identities*, pp.13-14

The regimental system was the second vehicle for Cardwell's social reformation of the soldier. There had always been elements of localisation in the regiment; local county traditions and affiliations were integral in the identity of many in the infantry. Numbering in order of age-seniority had been the formal identification for the majority of line regiments since the late seventeenth century, despite moves to adopt official county titles reflecting local affiliations at the end of the eighteenth. What Cardwell intended to achieve through the Localisation Act and General Order 32 was the deconstruction of the physical and social obstacles which had encouraged clear and formidable barriers between life in the army and the civilian world by placing the regiment at the centre of regional, and particularly rural and agricultural, communities.²³

As with the short-service system, recruiting was the focus of his schemes. It was the point at which the army came in the closest contact with civilians as recruiters sought to engage and convince a potential recruit. The localisation of the county regiment both encompassed and enhanced that connection. Recruiting was to be conducted by district. Therefore, local men would be encouraged to join their local regiment. Over time, experience and familiarity with the army would build as sons followed fathers, brothers followed siblings and friends enlisted together. By affiliating a regiment more closely with a region, it would also raise the presence of the army, encouraging interaction through military spectacle and display which would be less threatening than the presence of a recruiting officer. The closer cooperation between regular and amateur forces was also intended to strengthen civil-military ties as greater familiarity between members of the regulars and local volunteers would be fostered.²⁴

²³ Bond, 'Late Victorian Army', p.621.

²⁴ I. F. W. Beckett, *Amateur Military Tradition 1558–1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), p.185.

In his reforms to the regimental system and short service, Cardwell had been heavily influenced by the French and German armies. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 – 1871 had brought the differences in military establishments between them and the British into sharp contrast. The Prussian system in particular encouraged Cardwell's own plans. Established in 1866, Prussia's structure was based around the principle of localisation. Within 12 *Corps d'Armee* districts there were four sub-districts linked to *Landwehr* (Militia) battalions and connected to regiments of the Prussian Army. At 17 years old the young men of the district were required to register and select the manner in which they would be prepared to serve. They could enlist in the reserves at 18 and serve for six years or they were permitted to defer their service until they were 21 years old at which point they were drafted into the Regular Army for three years before completing a further four years in the reserve and finally five years in the *Landwehr*. As a final reserve, men released from the *Landwehr* entered an additional pool which could be called out in an emergency which applied to men under the age of 48.²⁵

The establishment of recruiting districts localised around *Landwehr* battalions was intended to improve the life of those serving, maintaining close links with the civilian population and providing support for current and ex-soldiers. The system was explained in a lecture presented to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in 1871 by Captain Brackenbury:

Each regiment has a district where it lives surrounded by the friends of the soldiers, together with the reserves which are to reinforce it in war, and the *Landwehr* who are to take its place in the fortress. If a father serves in a regiment, his sons serve there too someday. Family traditions

²⁵ C. B. Brackenbury, Captain 'The Military Systems of Prussia and France in 1870' in (ed.) Robertson-Cunningham, *Notes on Mr Cardwell's Speech*, pp.7-11.

are kept up and home influences are not denied to the soldier. The officers are known throughout the countryside and no-one out of harmony can be admitted to the regiment except by the carelessness of officers already holding a commission in it. Most civil posts in the districts are before the men as possible rewards for good conduct and cultivation of talents and in the worst case there is always the old regiment at hand to help those who have passed through it and have since fallen into difficulties. There can be but good feeling between the soldiers and the civilian population and the soldier is never quite out of reach of the tender advice of a mother and the softening influences of home.²⁶

It was the success of this system in Prussia and one similar in France which led Cardwell to devise the Localisation Act of July 1872 and General Order 32 of April 1873 in the British Army. It was hoped that for the British, firm links similar to those described in Prussia by Captain Brackenbury, would soon develop. The effectiveness of such a relationship would, Cardwell hoped, be sufficient to negate the need for conscription, despite the fact that the continental templates relied on conscription themselves.

Cardwell introduced several further initiatives aimed at raising the image and status of the soldier. Methods and systems of recruiting were particularly important. The War Office was aware of the further damage being inflicted on the image of the army and, by association on the soldiers, by the methods of recruiting traditionally used. Recruiting officers were instructed to refrain from recruiting in public houses. Bounties for enlisting and the escorting of recruits were also banned to discourage fraudulent enlistment and coercion on the part of the recruiter.²⁷ Instead, regiments were encouraged to rely on the efforts of pensioner soldiers as well as the amateurs to conduct the majority of the recruiting efforts in their district.²⁸ Combined with alterations to the terms of service of the soldiers themselves and the role they played in encouraging

²⁶ Brackenbury, 'The Military Systems of Prussia and France', p.11.

²⁷ Spiers, *Army and Society*, p.184.

²⁸ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.32.

connections with their home communities, Cardwell sought to orchestrate a social reimagining of the soldier.

CARDWELL AND THE ORDINARY SOLDIER

Short service was intended, from the potential recruit's perspective, to present the opportunity for a reduced career as an alternative to the intimidating commitment of twelve or twenty-one years, without losing the chance for adventure and travel and a smart uniform. Localisation sought to recast the soldier as an integral member of the civilian community, local men they could be proud of and call their own, wishing them well as they departed and welcoming them home after only a few years. These changes were intended to encourage a higher class of recruit. But the War Office was also aware that the enduring suspicion of the soldier as a criminal or drunkard might require direct address to complete the appeal they sought.

The rehabilitation of the image of the soldier in the public mind, the 'quality' of the men the army recruited and the methods by which it encouraged good men to serve a full twenty-one year service attracted much debate. A report into the discharge and branding of soldiers published by Lt. General William Mansfield in 1871 outlined the issue as such:

In the condition of the army we should devote our attention to the acquisition of good and willing men...rather than to the forcible retention of bad characters and of those to whom the military career on trial proves to be very distasteful...in short that the forcible retention of the bad is one of our greatest obstacles to obtaining the good. The old system...proceeded partly on the notion that men totally unfitted to the establishments of industry and trade by their violent dispositions and dishonest propensities, were nevertheless good enough for the army, their being reducible to order by cruel and severe punishment and a never-

ceasing system of vigilance, supervision and discipline, founded on the principle of fear.²⁹

Working-class men of 'good character', it was argued by officers and politicians, were set against the army career as they disliked the prospect of entering an institution in which one's day to day comrades were criminal, violent or unpleasant men. Furthermore, as Mansfield went on to argue, the methods of punishment by which undesirable men were kept in check further dissuaded positive recruitment.³⁰ Cardwell identified the problem as early as 1869 when he abolished branding, attempted to discharge men of bad character from the service and abolished the bounties offered on joining to dissuade fraudulent enlistment and repeat deserters. Despite the efforts of Mansfield and Cardwell however, it would take several further reforms to the life and conditions of the soldier to convince the public that he was not a criminal or, as Biddulph termed it, a man 'reckless enough to enlist'.³¹ As Chapter 4 highlights, the soldier and crime remained one of the most common contexts for the soldier in the press.

As the War Office sought to popularise the army it was faced with a dual challenge. Tommy Atkins was not a man many Victorians aspired to emulate for a multitude of reasons: dubious company; the threat of severe treatment and punishment; unsavoury recruiting methods; the prospect of life spent in unhealthy climates abroad; and the alien nature of the military institution. All were considered to be factors contributing to the overall low status of the career soldier. Cardwell attempted to address these issues as far as his own capabilities and the Liberal Party would allow. There was no great capital

²⁹ TNA: WO 33/22: W. R. M. Mansfield, Lieutenant General, *Notes on Discharge of Soldiers, Branding & c.* (1871).

³⁰ Branding by tattoo was used to mark out a repeat offender with 'BC' meaning 'Bad Character', or a deserter with the letter 'D'.

³¹ Biddulph, *Lord Cardwell at the War Office*, pp.208-209.

invested in the soldier. Three-and-a-half million pounds, almost three-hundred-million pounds in 2014 standards, were allocated to build new regimental depots and other military establishments. It was the equivalent of one-third of the annual budget allocated to the army in the 1869 Army Estimates. Little was intended for the soldier directly.³² In the context of recruiting and reforming the identity of Tommy Atkins in the early 1870s, the Cardwell Reforms were not altogether successful. As the Airey Committee would later highlight, the quantity and quality of recruits had not improved a great deal – certainly not to the extent which Cardwell might have liked. As Spiers notes, his expectations were rather too sanguine.³³

None of Cardwell's schemes failed outright. Initially however, the results were less than gratifying. This was due to a range of factors. The great pressure placed on regimental recruiting by the short-service acts meant that the increase in the annual recruiting returns was offset by the rapid turnover of manpower. In order to meet demand, the army was forced to lower its standards in recruits contrary to Cardwell's aims. The establishment of the regiments in localised organisations had been slow - only forty had been formed by 1874 with the knock-on effect that the newly linked battalions, in addition to not being free to transfer officers between them, failed in the early years to develop the intended bonds with the localities. Indeed many battalions never visited their own districts at all.³⁴ Spiers summarised his appraisal of the Cardwell reforms by framing the decisions the Secretary of State for War had taken within the political conditions in which he operated. 'Cardwell had to choose his order of priorities, work within a limited period of time, and accept the constraints of contemporary politics...He could hardly be faulted for failing to introduce measures which were beyond the realm

³² 'The Army Estimates' in *Reynolds's Newspaper* (7 March 1869), issue 969.

³³ Spiers, *Army and Society*, p.196.

³⁴ Spiers, *Army and Society*, p.196.

of practical politics.’³⁵ However, the denial of conscription had placed a heavy burden on the system from the outset. Coupled with a policy of financial retrenchment which discouraged the free allocation of money, there was not the financial incentive to encourage enlistment in the army.

These formative years of the campaign for the social rehabilitation of Tommy Atkins provided context and a basis for the subsequent movement which over thirty years would help shift public attitudes towards the soldier. Cardwell’s schemes in reality constituted only the framework of reorganisation upon which successive reformers were to build. What current historiography has not fully explored, and what this thesis has and will proceed to examine, is the on-going debate present in the background of the War Office-led reform movement. Cardwell was a product of his political climate. Retrenchment and efficiency were his primary remits, as they were for the Liberal Party. But his schemes were underpinned by a clear social interest too. Cardwell recognised the moral qualities in a soldier’s discipline and wished to see a mutual exchange of civil and military values. As a result, his reorganisation of the regimental system and popularisation of the military career provided subsequent ministers with the scope and inclination to reintroduce Tommy Atkins to civil society.

THE REFORMS TAKE ROOT: HARDY AND STANLEY, 1874 - 1879

The War Office did not rest on its laurels after Cardwell completed his term in office. The vast changes introduced required extensive management and monitoring as they progressed from a plan to reality and beyond. When Gathorne Hardy made way for Frederick Stanley as Secretary of State for War, the debate came to a head once again over the most appropriate course of action to take next. More importantly, the waves of

³⁵ Spiers, *Army and Society*, p.200.

investigation and discussion to have taken place during the period between the reforms of Cardwell and those of Childers in 1881 were coherent in their focus. They continued to explore the condition of the army retrospectively and prospectively. The period between 1874 and 1880, though generally overlooked in existing historiography, is essential therefore in our understanding of the measures to emerge at the end of the decade and into the 1880s. Many of the suggestions and initiatives to be implemented under Childers' short but influential tenure had their roots in the commissions and investigations of the previous decade, as the remainder of this section will demonstrate.

In February 1874 the Liberals were defeated by the Conservatives in the general election and Gladstone resigned as leader of the party. Despite being a likely contender to succeed Gladstone, so too ended Cardwell's tenure as Secretary of State for War and his political career. The Conservatives under Benjamin Disraeli had embarked on a six year term in office. Despite the preceding Liberal government having gained the reputation of a prolific reforming ministry and at times come under the accusation of being 'irresponsible radicals', the new Conservative government continued to pursue a policy of active reform. The period of 1874 to 1876 saw extensive governmental initiatives affecting industry, labour, commodities, employment, trade and education.³⁶ Despite this enthusiasm for reform however, the War Office refrained from introducing any major new policies in respect of the nation's military. Instead, the work of Lord Cardwell was allowed to continue and take effect.

To helm the War Office in his new cabinet, Disraeli appointed Gathorne Hardy as Secretary of State for War. Hardy, a lawyer by training, had been an MP for Leominster

³⁶ Lynch, *Nineteenth Century British History*, p.70.

since 1856. His political career had seen appointments at the Home Office and the Poor Law Board before assuming the position of Home Secretary towards the end of Disraeli's first ministry in 1867.³⁷ Following the re-election, the Home Secretary position was offered to Richard Cross, a surprise choice on Disraeli's part.³⁸ Hardy's achievements as War Secretary involved primarily the continuation and implementation of the Cardwell Reforms. He did not introduce any major initiatives or modifications to the military system as he found it or to the social position of the soldier.³⁹ One particular criticism against his term in office was directed at his failure to address and act upon concerns held by colleagues in the department beyond appointing an enquiry to investigate them. Despite launching a commission into the promotion prospects in the army for example, Hardy failed to take any great action in relation to its findings. Crucially, he did not deal with the army's recruiting difficulties which, despite Lord Cardwell's best efforts, had not been resolved.

When he first joined the War Office in February 1874, Hardy was presented with the reports of various departments keenly observing the performance of the Cardwell Reforms. With the final schemes barely eighteen months old, debate was still considerable within the military, political and public circles over their appropriateness and their current and projected success. The impact of the reforms to recruiting was discussed with particular intensity. The effects of short service were becoming more apparent: the annual intake had risen but so too had the annual figure required to maintain the army at establishment and replace the men entering the Reserves. In 1875 only 1.7% of the army's strength elected to reengage. Furthermore, of the 3,128 men

³⁷ J. Parry, 'Hardy, Gathorne Gathorne-, first earl of Cranbrook (1814–1906)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn., Jan 2008, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33356>, accessed 29 Sept. 2012].

³⁸ R. Blake, *Disraeli* (London: University Paperbacks Methuen & Co., 1969), p.539.

³⁹ Parry, 'Hardy, Gathorne Gathorne'.

who did reengage, only 109 did so at the cessation of their initial six year service. By 1879, that figure had fallen to 14 men, with only 1% of the army's strength electing to reengage.⁴⁰ Attention was focused on the impact of short service, watching for signs that attitudes towards enlisting were improving and that the recruiting crisis might finally be resolved.

A report on the current recruiting difficulties entitled *On Recruiting* was completed in May 1874.⁴¹ The aspect of the report to deal most closely with the soldiers' welfare concerned his pay. Drawing on an article from *The Times* published earlier that month, the report highlighted that the soldier, like any other commodity, continued to have his market value. If food and living expenses rose and the soldier's pay remained static, the army could never expect good quality and quantity in its recruits.⁴² Since the Conservatives, like the Liberals before them, were never likely to increase the pay of the soldier through fear of the incurred cost, the report left Hardy with limited food for thought in his early months at the War Office.

On Recruiting considered the more general public discussion of recruiting and the successes of short service and the linked battalions. Further to the soldier's pay, the report noted the difficulty in obtaining recruits which it attributed to the absence of a guaranteed pension after 21 years' service and the soldier's opposition to being freely transferred between one or other of the linked battalions. Concern had also been building over a perceived decline in physical strength amongst the men enlisting, suggesting many recruits were too young. It was not a detail the report chose to take

⁴⁰ Spiers, *Late Victorian Army*, p.122.

⁴¹ TNA: WO 33/22: *Report on Recruiting* (31. May 1874).

⁴² TNA: WO 33/22: *Report on Recruiting*, p.2; 'A Return Presented to Parliament on the Expense of Recruits for Regiments Serving in India' in *The Times* (11 May 1874), issue 27999.

issue with however, arguing that they would soon develop into strong young men. In the case of the linked battalions, the report argued that the soldier's situation was now more secure since he may now only be transferred between one of two battalions as opposed to any in general service in the first 15 months of his service.⁴³

The office of the Inspector-General of Recruiting kept a close eye on the army's intake and position over the years following Cardwell's reforms. Reporting to the Adjutant-General in January 1876, General Taylor informed his superior that for the most part, recruiting had been at a satisfactory level, describing the Officers Commanding Corps on home service as asserting that the recent recruits had been 'on the whole, of a fairly good type'.⁴⁴ However, even in his short eight page report, the need for further revision of the army's interactions with the public became clear. He dismissed the military's continuing desire for agricultural men, noting that 'The men who have lately joined the army have been procured from the large towns and the great centres of population'.⁴⁵

Moreover, he emphasised the need for greater financial encouragement if the desired class of recruit were to be enticed to enlist; 'The existing advantages, direct and indirect, which together form the remuneration offered to a soldier are evidently insufficient to attract to the ranks men physically and intellectually suitable for service in sufficient numbers to supply our requirements'.⁴⁶ The need remained to improve the social

⁴³ TNA: WO 33/22: *Report on Recruiting*, p.1.

⁴⁴ HCPP: *Report to the adjutant-general of Her Majesty's forces, by the inspector-general of recruiting, upon recruiting for the regular army for the year 1875, 1876* [c.1435], 82.99. p.1.

⁴⁵ HCPP: *Report to the adjutant-general of Her Majesty's forces, by the inspector-general of recruiting*, p.2.

⁴⁶ HCPP: *Report to the adjutant-general of Her Majesty's forces, by the inspector-general of recruiting*, p.2.

background of the soldier if the efficiency and strength of the army were to be improved.

THE TAYLOR COMMITTEE, 1875.

The latter half of the 1870s did not see any major addition to the fundamental reforms introduced by Cardwell. Despite this absence in action however, there was an active culture of revision with regards to the status of past reforms and the possibility of further measures frequently came under review. A steady observation was maintained on the progress of Cardwell's schemes and the possible need for further intervention. This was especially so in the case of recruiting and the status of the soldier. In 1875 the Taylor Committee released a more comprehensive report into the on-going nature of recruiting. Led by Major-General R. C. H. Taylor, then Inspector-General of Recruiting, the committee consisted of four senior British Army officers, Major-Generals P. L. MacDougal and J. W. Armstrong, Accountant-General J. Milton and Colonel E. G. Bulwer.⁴⁷ The committee was instructed to examine the conditions of recruiting in the army, to consider what aspects of the current regulations - if any - were in need of review and to offer suggestions for improvements to the recruiting system.

Initially the committee's findings were remarkably positive; the army was currently above establishment with the infantry in particular enjoying a surplus of 1,862 men.⁴⁸ There was however, a note of caution. As the effects of short service took root it suggested, the army would find its required annual intake rise rapidly as early as 1876 onwards. The report found too that while some 44% of regimental commanding officers

⁴⁷ General MacDougal had been deputy adjutant-general for intelligence, the first head of the Intelligence Branch since April 1873; General Armstrong would chair a further Royal Commission in 1878 under Stanley, Hardy's successor as War Secretary; by 1880 Col. Bulwer had risen to the post of Inspector-General of Recruiting and would be instrumental in the design and implementation of the Childers Reforms 1880-1882.

⁴⁸ TNA: WO 33/27: *Report of the Committee on Recruiting* (April 1875), p.1.

[C.O.s] were only ‘fairly satisfied’ or indeed ‘dissatisfied’ with the physical calibre and stamina of their recruits, the average height and chest measurements of 5 ft. 6½ in. and 34½ in. respectively were above the minimum requirements for enlistment and most satisfactory in the committee’s opinion.⁴⁹ A letter from General Lord Sandhurst, commander of the forces in Ireland highlighted that there was a tendency of some C.O.s to underestimate the quality of very raw recruits. It was also noted however, that in the system of short service, the army was in less of a position to tolerate an initial growth period of a year or two in which a young recruit was physically incompetent as short service was for such a limited period.⁵⁰ Despite the initial confidence expressed in the recent recruiting figures, the impact of short service – yet to be fully realised – was a concern.

Whilst Taylor’s committee was buoyant in its summary of the recruiting situation as it stood in 1874-5, the committee was less sanguine over the prospects for recruiting after 1876 predicting that the annual required intake would rise from 23,621 recruits in 1876 to 32,194 by 1879.⁵¹ Moreover, the committee reiterated the perception that the opportunities the army offered were not yet sufficient to attract the quality and quantity of men the desired. In their conclusion, the committee returned to a familiar mantra:

1. That the current (1875) inducements to enlist would not be sufficient after 1876 to attract enough men to the colours.
2. That as the number of short service men increased, there would be the need to attract more mature men to the army than those who currently enlist.
3. That it would be most desirable to raise the ‘moral status’ of the soldier and to attract a superior class of recruit than the current standard.
4. That the pay of non-commissioned officers should be increased to equal the rates of the labour market. - This does not apply to the private soldier

⁴⁹ TNA: WO 33/27: Taylor, *Report of the Committee on Recruiting*, p.2.

⁵⁰ Sandhurst, General Lord, ‘Memorandum on Recruiting in 1874 by the General Commanding the Forces in Ireland’, appendix 4 in TNA: WO 33/27: *Report of the Committee on Recruiting*, p.28.

⁵¹ TNA: WO 33/27: Taylor, *Report of the Committee on Recruiting*, p.19.

- who is unaffected by the inflation of prices affecting the ‘necessities of life’ since his kit, clothes, rations, lodgings and medical requirements are met by the service. His pay increase would be in the form of deferred pay.
5. Further to point 3: that the ‘dignity and emoluments’ of NCOs should be increased in order to encourage young middle-class men to consider service in the army as a viable career - which they did not at the present. This might remedy the perceived lack of value placed on the NCO’s stripes, lessened by the youth and inexperience of large proportions of the present NCOs.
 6. That the rate of desertion might be lessened if better conditions of treatment for young soldiers in the army, more efficient methods of recruiting to bar bad characters and greater financial inducements were introduced.
 7. That the manpower requirements to police India after 1876 would be too great.
 8. That a period of 12 years in which active service from soldiers may be expected in the regulars and reserves was too short in light of the great expense incurred by the state in obtaining and training recruits.⁵²

Central to the committee’s recommendations was the raising of the soldiers’ self-esteem and social status. This could be achieved through the marginal improvement of a variety of aspects deemed fundamental in the poor status and low morale the soldier suffered – pay, lifestyle, prospects and public ignorance. The report summarised its ambitions as such:

The committee are of [the] opinion that the most effectual means of dispelling the unfavourable ideas entertained of military service, which now operate so adversely to the obtaining of men of a superior class, would be -

- a) To make the private soldier contented with his position,
- b) To employ as much as possible the agency of private soldiers in the “bringing of recruits”.
- c) To publish widely the advantages of a soldier’s life, and the places he may enlist; and to induce magistrates and clergymen to encourage recruiting.
- d) To pursue rigidly the system already in place of discharging men of bad character; so that it may be known that conduct which brings discredit on the service will be held to disqualify a man from serving in the army.⁵³

⁵² TNA: WO 33/27: Taylor, *Report of the Committee on Recruiting*, pp.20-21.

⁵³ TNA: WO 33/27: Taylor, *Report of the Committee on Recruiting*, p.23.

The Taylor Committee's report offered clear caution that even if recruiting were to continue to operate at a satisfactory rate, the War Office would need to review the methods by which it currently enticed recruits before it met projected difficulties from 1876 onwards. Continuing with Cardwell's philosophy, the committee sought to encourage a self-perpetuating enhancement whereby improved terms and conditions would encourage more respectable and more capable men to enlist. This in turn incite others of a similar or even higher class to enlist also. Building on the short service and localised regimental systems, the report advocated improvement in pay, living conditions and prospects in order to attract career-minded men interested in a short spell fulfilling an interest in the military or desire to travel and also to encourage good men to remain for the full twelve or twenty-one years and provide the service with valuable NCOs. It was early days, but despite Cardwell's best efforts, his social rehabilitation of the soldier had not yet been achieved.

Hardy, if he did note the committee's recommendations, did not take any discernible action in response. Some of the initiatives Cardwell had introduced continued to fail to reach fruition even by the end of Hardy's time in office. Despite a sizable percentage of the War Office's £3,500,000 reform budget having been allocated to the building of new regimental depots, barracks and stores for example, by 1878 two thirds of the planned construction had not been completed.⁵⁴ The work of the Taylor Committee was not wasted however. The reforms had been allowed to ferment and take root, but the debate never fully ceased. Despite a tendency for historians to focus primarily on the Cardwell Reforms, before advancing directly to the modifications introduced in 1881, we should note that the period of inactivity under Hardy did not mean a cessation of the debate. The initiatives which would emerge under Childers's term as Secretary of State for War (1880-2) owed their origins to the likes of the Taylor Committee. Hardy left the War Office on the 2 April 1878

⁵⁴ Bond, 'Cardwell, Viscount Edward'.

succeeding Lord Salisbury as the Secretary of State for India. He was replaced by Frederick Stanley. Under Stanley, the War Office's interest in the question of recruiting for the army and the need to raise the social status of Tommy Atkins resurfaced in earnest.

When Frederick Stanley succeeded Hardy as Secretary of State for War he was met by a department in reflection. It had been eight years since Lord Cardwell had passed the Enlistment Act enabling short service and the War Office was keen to assess its impact and address any issues which may have arisen because of it. 1877 had seen 26,728 men enlist, slightly fewer than the previous year. Of those enlisted in 1877, 24,637 had been short-service men. At the other end, 1,815 men had been discharged once their initial (short) service had expired, 11.5% of the army's total discharge and wastage for that year.⁵⁵ When the net increase and decrease was compared, the army was essentially breaking even; 31,997 men enlisted in total (including from desertion) and 31,540 men died in service or were discharged. General Whitmore's report was encouraging. The Inspector-General for Recruiting cited a rise in the 'popularity of the service' as one of the key contributing factors to the strong rates of recruitment, although this was followed by a cautionary note to the depression in trade and subsequent unemployment at the present time.

Stanley was more sympathetic than his predecessor to the necessity of active reform to the progression of the army as an institution. Unlike Hardy's background in law, Frederick Stanley was once himself a soldier for a brief time in the late 1850s, retiring as a Captain from the Grenadier Guards in 1865. He had since continued his affiliation with the military accepting an honorary Colonelcy with the 3rd/4th Battalions Kings Own Lancashire

⁵⁵ HCPP: *Report to the Adjutant-General of Her Majesty's forces, by the Inspector-General of recruiting, upon recruiting for the regular army, for the year 1877, 1878, [c.1945], 84.122, p.3.*

Regiment and also with the 1st Volunteer Battalion Liverpool Regiment. His political career too had crossed paths previously with the War Office – he had served as Financial Secretary to the department in 1874.⁵⁶

Stanley did not achieve significantly more than Hardy during his time at the War Office, although serving for only two years until the return of the Liberals in 1880 certainly limited his scope for action. The Army Discipline and Regulation Act was passed in 1879 to consolidate the complex and convoluted Mutiny Act and the Articles of War, although they were rescinded in 1881 for being overly complex in content and lacking a direct system of punishment and reward.⁵⁷ The more important progress to have taken place under Stanley's direction was through the appointment of two Royal Commissions intended to establish how the soldier might further be popularised and accepted by the British public.

THE ARMSTRONG COMMITTEE, 1878.

The first of the two commissions, under the chairmanship of General J. W. Armstrong was appointed on the 10 April 1878. The committee was to consider what inducements might be offered to encourage a higher class of recruit to enlist and retired soldiers to re-enlist. To this effect, the committee considered primarily the methods by which desirable soldiers might be rewarded for good service, encouraged to remain with the colours or to leave on good terms thus likely to return if needed.⁵⁸ Re-education in the advantages of good and

⁵⁶ H. C. G. Matthew, 'Stanley, Frederick Arthur, sixteenth earl of Derby (1841–1908)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn., May 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36245, accessed 29 Sept. 2012].

⁵⁷ French, *Military Identities*, p.181.

⁵⁸ TNA: WO 33/32: General J. W. Armstrong, *Report of the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the Conditions of a Soldier's service as affected by the Short Service System and matters in connection therewith*, (1878), p.3.

extended service with the army was identified as a key method for achieving a comprehensive shift in the manner and attitude of the men serving.

The object with regards pay, good-conduct pay, deferred pay, and rewards, has been to retain the full value of all that previously existed, and at the same time, without undue expense, to improve the position of the soldier, to simplify the keeping of accounts, records of service, and returns, and above all, to enable even the last joined recruit to understand alike the advantages of joining the service and the advantages to be gained by good conduct.⁵⁹

Incentives such as good-conduct pay had long been in existence. The state had allocated a considerable sum to such rewards, although over the course of the 1870s this figure had progressively lessened. The budget for 1872-3 for example was £139,348. This figure had diminished gradually however so by 1878 it stood at £133,808. Despite this decrease however, the committee still rated the inclusion of good-conduct pay highly as a means of encouraging acceptable behaviour from its soldiers. They were to be used in conjunction with service badges issued ever 2, 6, 12 and 18 years.⁶⁰

The report also considered how reform to the systems of punishment within the army might discourage and eradicate men of 'bad character' without deterring men of good character from joining or remaining. In particular, the committee mused over the rather peculiar state of affairs by which men of bad character were compelled to remain in the army whilst those who had acquitted themselves well were offered the opportunity to leave.

It appears almost self-evident, that it must be contrary to the interest of the state and of the army, to retain men of bad or indifferent character with the Colours for a longer period than steady and well conducted soldiers. This, however, is the result of the system at present in force. A soldier who suffers imprisonment by sentence of a civil court or court-martial, or who

⁵⁹ TNA: WO 33/32: Armstrong, *Report of the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the Conditions of a Soldier's service*, p.5.

⁶⁰ TNA: WO 33/32: Armstrong, *Report of the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the Conditions of a Soldier's service*, p.7.

absents himself for more than five days is compelled to serve after completing his six years, to make up for the time passed in prison or in absence.

Furthermore, the report found, the consequences suffered by individuals guilty of illegal absence from duty did not lose out as they might since the absence of a pension or the threat of lost deferred pay did not exist.

The soldier who undergoes imprisonment or absents himself without leave from duty is deprived of his deferred pay for the days on which he fails to perform his duty...as he is retained to make up for lost service, he at the same time makes up his deferred pay, and consequently suffers no inconvenience in this respect on discharge.⁶¹

The committee advocated a reversal of the system to encourage and reward well conducted men and remove bad ones where appropriate. To encourage full term service, the issue of pensions and the status of NCOs were considered with the hope of improving the desirability of the army as a career. Since short service was introduced, fewer men wanted the responsibility of non-commissioned officer status for what was viewed as a temporary stint in the army.

To address these issues, the committee suggested first off an increase of pay in line with each promotion and a meritocratic system of promotion to encourage men to strive for advancement.⁶² These solutions covered only part of the issue which, as the soldiers themselves highlighted in their memoirs in chapters 8 and 9 also saw men isolated from their friends with whom they were legally prevented from conversing. Furthermore, newly promoted men were forced to join a costly NCO mess and acquired additional duties

⁶¹ TNA: WO 33/32: Armstrong, *Report of the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the Conditions of a Soldier's service*, p.18.

⁶² TNA: WO 33/32: Armstrong, *Report of the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the Conditions of a Soldier's service*, p.20.

without a secure rank and extra pay. Whilst the Armstrong Committee recognised the fundamental problems, the solutions offered fell somewhat short of the mark.

In the final considerations of its report, the Armstrong Committee began to identify the difficulties and prejudices soldiers, NCOs particularly, experienced when in public and the need to address them. 'Some endeavours should be made to improve the social position of non-commissioned officers', the report stated, 'It often happens that the fact of wearing Her Majesty's uniform proves a disadvantage to soldiers when travelling or when attending theatres or other places of public amusement.'⁶³ As a specific example, the report cited the exclusion of soldiers from 2nd class saloons on steam-ships frequented when the soldier embarked on furlough (leave). Many companies denied soldiers access to such facilities despite their being capable of paying for the privilege and their accompanying wives suffering no such bar.

By way of solutions to the social prejudices NCOs experienced, the committee recommended a list of initiatives intended to imbue greater prestige in their position. With regards to the steam-ship, it was suggested that it should be specified as part of the contract between the government and the shipping company that no such embargoes be placed on the soldiers' movements and freedoms while aboard. Further distinctions were suggested including improvements to the uniform of NCOs, a unification of rank insignia across the army and special leave passes to be issued which did not show the date of last offence. Improvements to NCOs' barrack arrangements were also submitted which advocated separate or improved quarters for sergeants furnished with a table and chair. Licence to

⁶³ TNA: WO 33/32: Armstrong, *Report of the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the Conditions of a Soldier's service*, p.23.

burn a light up to one hour after lights out was also advocated, both as a means of providing greater freedom, privacy and distinction to the men who were the most valuable ordinary soldier in the British Army and bore the greatest responsibility with their position.⁶⁴

Ultimately, the initiatives proposed regarding NCOs were intended to render the position desirable. The appeal was intended to apply internally as the War Office wanted to encourage able short-service soldiers in particular to covet NCO status and re-enlist for their full 21 year service to ascend the ladder of the other ranks. It was also intended to exist alongside a wider campaign to encourage an external rise in social status, to be achieved largely through improving the social estimation of the soldiering career. The Armstrong Report concluded by setting forth suggestions for means by which the improved conditions of military service might be advertised to the public. Despite the various inducements introduced to encourage enlistment, the report highlighted, the majority of recruits enlisted in ignorance of them. Instead, it was recommended that a wide range of advertising be employed in order to ensure the calibre of man the reforms were intended to attract was made aware of their existence.

Advertisements should be frequently inserted in the London and county papers and placarded at railway stations, and notices explaining the advantages of the army should be issued to the Postmaster-General, for distribution to all post offices in the United Kingdom at least twice a year. The advertisements in county papers should contain information regarding all recruiting agencies in the county.⁶⁵

The proposal under the section 'miscellaneous report' was little more than a suggestion intended to enhance the reforms to soldiers' service conditions which formed the bulk of the report. They were however, to be instrumental under Childers in targeting the

⁶⁴ TNA: WO 33/32: Armstrong, *Report of the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the Conditions of a Soldier's service*, p.24.

⁶⁵ TNA: WO 33/22: Armstrong, *Report of the Committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the Conditions of a Soldier's service*, p.27.

persistently strong prejudice displayed by the working classes to military service. The War Office was beginning to acknowledge that the social neglect and mistrust suffered by the ordinary soldier was not going to be resolved simply by addressing the internal issues which encouraged such negative stereotypes. It was necessary to advertise the benefits of joining the army directly to the public and ensure that the reforms the government introduced had the desired impact.

CONCLUSION

It was this realisation which was to progress the reforms to the recruiting and public relations strategy under Childers in the early 1880s. Reports such as those submitted by the Taylor and Armstrong Committees were not dynamic nor seismic. They were rarely referenced explicitly during the periods of reform which were to follow. For these reasons perhaps, historians in the past may be accused of cherry picking the more explicitly significant examples of military reform whilst overlooking the background debate which preceded it and led the War Office to the decisions it was eventually to reach. Such documentation, as the Taylor and Armstrong reports demonstrate, is invaluable however in appreciating fully the motivation behind the reforms and the ideas and theories in play.

Furthermore, what these earlier initiatives reveal is that the measures introduced by Cardwell and Childers, separated by almost a decade of careful monitoring and reflection, were not independent spikes of civil-military reform but struts supporting several years of intensive and official and semi-official discussion. The initiatives modernising the army's systems of advertising and public relations introduced by Childers in particular owe their origins to this interim and the commissions set up by Hardy and Stanley. Frederick Stanley

during his two years at the War Office had actively sought to compile a complete reappraisal of the organisational efficiency and appropriateness of the army and to establish what areas required additional or further reform. For the most part this translated into the commissions he appointed to investigate the situation and gather the relevant information to inform future decisions. The largest and most influential of these was the Airey Commission of 1879.

CHAPTER TWO

RESCUE AND REINFORCEMENT:

THE AIREY COMMISSION 1879 – 1880

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 explored the introduction and immediate impact of the Cardwell Reforms on the British Army and the soldier. With regards to the latter, the changes had been attempted in a subtle yet assertive fashion. The social status of the rank-and-file had not been reinvented; the reports from the Inspector-General of Recruiting's office had indicated that buoyant recruiting was reliant upon the economy and the weakness of trading and employment. However, a comprehensive series of schemes had been established which sought to address continuing concerns over the soldier's background and social status. Further revisions to systems of promotion, reward and punishment supplemented the movement towards localisation which had attempted to reinvest the soldiers in their home communities whilst drawing on the option of short service in order to encourage a wider range of appeal.

The second half of the 1870s saw the dust from the Cardwell Reforms settle around the War Office and the army. The results were watched with intense curiosity by politicians and soldiers alike. What they saw was met by many with increasing concern. The systems Cardwell had envisaged had not met with complete success, either at home or abroad. The linked battalions were heavily unbalanced. The series of small colonial wars of the 1870s had precipitated an increasingly uneven distribution so by 1880 fifty-three battalions remained at home attempting to supply eighty-two battalions abroad.¹ Furthermore, the battalions at home, which had supposedly been established in depots

¹ French, *Military Identities*, p.19

many of which had not yet been built in 1879, had been charged with recruiting and training the soldiers intended to replenish their sister battalions with fully battle-ready reinforcements.

Thanks to the system encouraging the swift transferal of seasoned soldiers overseas, the home battalions had become shadows of military units populated by exceptionally young recruits and old soldiers, the likes of whom were physically incapable of withstanding service in the harsh Indian and African climates. The army continued to struggle against the challenges presented by recruitment. It was a problem the Cardwell Reforms through the introduction of short service and localised recruiting had been intended to remedy. Whether they had been successful, or just succeeded in prolonging or even exacerbating the issue was a matter the War Office and army were keen to establish by the end of the decade.

This chapter will examine the first major movement by the War Office to rescue the Cardwell Reforms and complete the task of popularising the soldier. The Airey Commission has been overlooked by current scholarship. It is accurate to suggest that the committee's recommendations did not achieve the impact it might have expected, despite its considerable scale and the resources made available to it by Stanley. Chapter 2 will argue however, that the Airey Report's apparently uninspiring immediate impact has distracted historians from the significance of the concepts it submitted. The disruption of the new Liberal Secretary of State for War Hugh Childers replacing Stanley in 1880 has given the impression that its findings were dismissed. Opposition to key Cardwellian schemes such as the linked battalions has further marked the committee as reactionary. The scope of issues the committee addressed meant it was

inevitable that certain reversions to pre-1870 would be favoured. However, a closer examination of the smaller initiatives which were proposed reveals that the approach of the committee in general was inventive and progressive. It was informed in part by the Taylor and Armstrong reports and influenced greatly the reforms of the subsequent government.

THE AIREY COMMISSION 1879 - 1880

The various discussions, debates, committees and reports, routine and special, to have emanated from the War Office during the 1870s culminated in the appointment of the Airey Committee in June 1879. The previous Taylor and Armstrong commissions had voiced increasing concern over the projected suitability of the existing military system, in particular the social status of the other ranks and the corresponding popularity of the army. The remit and resources of the new committee were wider and greater than any previous investigation and it was anticipated that the conclusions they reached would inform the direction of military affairs leading into the 1880s.

The impact and importance of the Airey report has been questioned by historians however primarily in the context of their examination of the political and strategic development of the army. Hamer acknowledged the value of the report from a social perspective, particularly in relation to the views of the traditional and reactionary 'old soldiers' of the committee who, 'reflected views and a way of life in the army that, though outmoded and unrealistic under the changed conditions of Empire and of warfare, are perfectly understandable when seen in the light of earlier tradition'.² The recommendations made by the committee exposed the predilections of officers of the

² Hamer, *Civil-Military Relations*, p. 82

pre-Cardwell army, argues Hamer, as they sought the opportunity to reverse the changes which had derived from the principles of 'high-minded and serious Victorians such as Sidney Herbert and Cardwell'.³

Its importance too has been undermined too by the apparent disregard with which the final report was treated by the new Secretary of State for War Hugh Childers when it was finally submitted in the spring of 1880. Spiers has dismissed its importance based on the efforts made by the War Office to suppress aspects of its findings, especially those attacking Cardwell's schemes.⁴ In other areas of scholarship, the Airey Report has served more as a source of reference, offering as it does easy access to a wealth of information and data conveniently gathered, digested and quantified in the process of the committee's examination of the records presented to it.⁵

Despite its broader limitations in terms of organisational and strategic concerns however, this chapter will argue that the Airey Committee had far greater influence and significance in the social development of the late-Victorian army than it has previously been credited with. A closer examination of the report and the attitudes and ideas expressed within reveals a stance which, though by no means in complete support of Cardwell and the reforms of the early 1870s, is not a single-minded pursuit of its demolition either. The committee under Lord Airey undoubtedly sought to locate the faults in Cardwell's schemes. It also, however, sought to address many wider issues relating to recruitment, training and the quality of life of the rank-and-file from raw recruit to experienced soldier to army pensioner.

³ Hamer, *Civil-Military Relations*, p.82

⁴ Spiers, *Late Victorian Army*, p.32.

⁵ Tucker makes particular use of the Airey Committee findings in his reassessment of the Cardwell Reforms in, Tucker, 'Army and Society in England 1870-1900', pp.132-133.

THE COMMISSION IS APPOINTED

The scope of the committee's remit and the wealth of resources made available to it indicates a desire for a fundamental review of the army's progress rather than an attempt to reverse the past. In this respect particularly, the commission demonstrated thinking more akin to the socially conscious minds of the mid-Victorian Liberals than an ageing cadre of the social elite. The Airey Report played an integral role in the government's social rehabilitation of Tommy Atkins. It represents, as this chapter will demonstrate, the linchpin which following from recommendations presented by prior reports such as that of the Armstrong Committee (1878), led to the reform of the recruiting system introduced by Childers from 1880.

Described as the 'high-water mark' in the reaction to the Cardwell Reforms by Hamer, concern for the state and future efficiency of the army came to a head in 1879.⁶ Stanley approached the Commander-in-Chief Field Marshall HRH the Duke of Cambridge in June 1879 to launch an inquiry into the situation. 'These questions appear to be so grave to me', he stated in the memorandum accompanying the commission's eventual report, 'that I have asked HRH to nominate a committee, to be composed of general and other officers of high standing and experience, in order that by their advice steps may be taken to remedy the practical defects which are found to have occurred in Lord Cardwell's schemes.'⁷

Appointed as chair of the committee was General Lord Richard Airey GCB. Joining Lord Airey was an assortment of experienced and high-ranking officers including six Generals and Lieutenant-Generals, a Major-General, three Colonels and a Colonel

⁶ Hamer, *Civil-Military Relations*, p.83

⁷ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.3.

Secretary. The committee was afforded a vast volume of evidence, through which to begin to construct an impression of the weaknesses and faults in the military system and to report back with potential solutions where possible. At their disposal were the reports from the various committees and returns to have been supplied to the War Office throughout the 1870s. These included routine annual reports from the office of the Inspector-General of Recruiting, returns from regular and medical officers relating to company strength and the ages and details of service of the men under their command, and the reports from various other commissions over the years exploring matters including localisation (1872), recruiting (1875), boy enlistment and the Militia (1876) and brigade depots. In addition to these resources, the committee conducted interviews with individuals including: current and retired officers and NCOs; civil and military doctors recently returned from expeditions with the army in Afghanistan and South Africa; high-ranking military officials such as the Duke of Cambridge; and several eminent civilians who had either taken a particular interest in military affairs or were civilian employers well-placed to advise the army on the condition and nature of the labour markets.⁸

The memorandum issued by Stanley presented to the committee an extensive and lengthy remit. It was largely focussed around gathering evidence relating specifically to the background and qualities of the army's recent recruitment intake, the system which controlled, supported and facilitated recruitment and the retention and use of experienced NCOs. It also requested that the various aspects of Cardwell's scheme including the depots, the reserves, the linked battalion system and short service be reviewed and the question of their continuing application be considered. The commission's remit was as follows:

⁸ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.7.

The Committee will take the best evidence attainable -

- a. With respect to the general class of men who now enlist, their age, physique and general ultimate efficiency.
- b. And to the proportions which it may be deemed desirable for the future to establish between service with the colours and service in the reserve.
- c. Whether any extension of engagement appears desirable.
- d. Whether recruits should be ranged under more than one class.
- e. What are the causes that have led to the prevailing youth of those now with the colours at home, and whether they can be remedied.
- f. Whether the better verification of the age of recruits and a more searching examination by responsible officers cannot be attained.
- g. Whether any system of reserve battalions could be established in lieu of the depots.
- h. Whether there are any depots which further experience proves it would be desirable to abandon.
- i. Whether such depot buildings would be available for store purposes, and what would be the approximate cost involved by such changes.
- j. Whether concentration at other places would be advisable.
- k. Whether battalions might not be recruited entirely through the militia.
- l. Whether some fresh inducements might now be held out to secure and retain with the colours a good class of non-commissioned officer of a more mature age than those now serving.
- m. Whether means can be provided, by increasing service or otherwise, by which battalions proceeding to India can be supplied by men whose service will not necessitate their being sent home under a given term of years.
- n. Lastly, being a matter closely connected with the above considerations, it would be well that the committee should place on record their opinion, whether the present organisation of battalions and companies is on the whole, the best for the purposes required for the English army both at home and abroad.⁹

Stanley's memorandum echoed some of the concerns troubling the War Office in recent months and the parameters he set the committee revolved noticeably around the poor standard of soldiers entering the ranks of the army thanks to their youth and background. Identifying potentially the source of many of the issues as the 'practical defects which are found to have occurred in Lord Cardwell's schemes', the committee's review was to be conducted as a quasi-social investigation of the army's organisation.

⁹ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, pp.5-6.

THE CARDWELL REFORMS UNDER SCRUTINY

A key point the report takes issue with is regimental *esprit de corps*. It was preoccupation which, in the view of Hamer and Spiers, illustrates the reactionary stance from which the committee approached the question of reform. Nonetheless, it had considerable bearing on the development and esteem of the soldier. Claiming that cross-posting was resulting in the loss of the ‘family ethos’ and support of the regiment with a direct impact on discipline and efficiency, the committee wrote:

Recruits are kept for a short time (sometimes only a few weeks and occasionally even a few days) at the depots, are passed onto battalions where they remain for a few months, and are then again passed on to other battalions, their interest in obtaining and maintaining the good opinion of their officers is lessened, discipline suffers, the men do not feel the necessity of making permanent friendships among their comrades, their minds become unsettled and that *esprit de corps*...is annihilated.¹⁰

How far such sentiments may be classed as reactionary is debatable. There is undoubtedly a level of sentimentality for the old system, however, the question of *esprit de corps* was of great importance to the British Army and taken seriously by reformers and reactionaries alike. The principle applied strongly in Cardwell’s localisation scheme as regional associations were intended to cultivate a form of county-family identity encouraging local men to enlist. Furthermore, the sense of family within the regiment and the connections maintained with home through localisation were designed to add a further sense of accountability. Young soldiers were encouraged to behave lest they bring shame upon themselves and embarrass the regiment or their kith and kin back home.

¹⁰ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.10.

Criticism of Cardwell's reforms continued. The impact of short service on the soldier had been of particular concern for the advisors at the War Office since the 1875 Taylor Committee. The Airey Commission finally defined categorically the negative effects of the scheme on recruiting and the quality of the men enlisting. Primarily, the immature age and physical development of the short-service men and the past and projected pressures placed on recruiting were highlighted as problems stemming from the introduction of short service. In the years preceding Cardwell (1866-70), the army required an average of 17,681 recruits per annum. In the years following short service introduction however, allowing for the impact to stabilize, the annual required intake for 1876-79 had risen to 28,808 recruits. With this trajectory projected for the next twenty years the committee suggested, the average intake required would be in the region of 30,000 men.¹¹

The experiences of the soldier played a central role in what the Airey Committee perceived as a problem of manpower wastage for the army. Nearly a quarter of the Airey Committee's report was dedicated to discussing what was referred to as 'waste'. Referring to the increase in demand for recruits, the report described the situation as, 'an evil', and one which must, 'not only affect the discipline and efficiency of the army but adds enormously to the difficulty in maintaining its ranks at the required strength. This difficulty is one which has been increasing for many years and is one which requires very serious consideration.'¹² Furthermore, the report argued that it was during this period that new soldiers, many of whom were young and physically underdeveloped, most struggled with the rigours of military life. Concerns had arisen previously in respect of short service; the average age of the new recruit had for some time been

¹¹ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.23.

¹² HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.23.

considered to be too low. Of the 28,035 recruits to join the regular army in 1878 for example, 13,467 or nearly half of the intake were under the age of twenty. The immaturity of young soldiers meant that they were unable to deal effectively with the physical hardships complicit with certain aspects of service.¹³ The committee stated that ideally recruitment would be limited to men over the age of twenty years.

A major side-effect of the poor physical stature of the underage recruits was the high level of desertions prevalent across the country. The report found that young men unable to withstand the regimes to which they were subjected were much more likely to desert than their older, more experienced and stronger comrades. If considered over a period of seven years, the report stated, an average 123 out of every 1000 men would desert after less than one year, or an average of three months of colour service. By the following year, a further 123 men would have deserted and by their third year, or after an average of two years of service, 44 more would have fled the colours, bringing the total average desertion rate to be 290 out of the original 1000 recruits. Should this average continue, by the end of the sixth year 387 out of 1000 men would have deserted from the army.¹⁴

The desertion rate was fairly substantial. Between the years 1873 and 1878, the average annual rate of desertion was 3,821 from an average 36,000 men.¹⁵ Although not an overwhelming proportion of the annual intake, this figure was of course to be added to the other sources of annual manpower waste. Further to deserters, 2,729 men legally purchased their discharge from the army and 1,813 men were dishonourably discharged. The cost of desertion both financially and in terms of the morale and reputation of the

¹³ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.16.

¹⁴ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.15.

¹⁵ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.18.

army was also considered by the committee. Examining the years 1876, 1877 and 1878, the report calculated the following losses in relation to the expenditure already committed in respect of training:

12,636 men deserting within year 1.....	£431,700
11,177 men deserting within year 2.....	£745,600
3,044 men deserting after year 2.....	£354,900
Total.....	£1,532,200
Annual average expenditure wasted.....	£500,000. ¹⁶

The likely prospect that the high desertion rates would later become public knowledge further worried the committee. As it will become apparent later in this thesis, the army's struggle to grasp and rehabilitate its own image and reputation in society was hindered not least by the limited understanding the public possessed of crime and punishment in the military. Parliament and the newspapers regularly released reports on court-martials and desertion figures, both which had the potential to damage the image of the soldier. While ignorance of the breadth and limited severity of crimes warranting court-martials in the army helped to perpetuate the notion that law-breaking was rife, a high level of desertion further buried the character of the British Tommy and the moral conduct of the army as a whole.

Considering the youth of their recruits and the physical strain of the initial months of their training, the committee sought the advice of military and civilian surgeons with regards to the treatment of young soldiers. The general consensus of the response they received was that the avoidance of employing men under the age of twenty was

¹⁶ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p. 18.

advisable, either in terms of recruiting if possible, or if not then by withholding heavier duties until they reached a more mature age. Surgeon-Major Leith-Adams, one of the medical officers responsible for overseeing the admittance of recruits in respect of their medical, stated:

It seems to me most advisable that, for duty purposes, a very broad line should be drawn between the nature of the immature and of the fully developed soldier. It is not only pernicious to the interests of the service but also cruel to expect a lad in his 'teens' to do the work of a fully grown man.¹⁷

The report drew on other individuals including that of Sir William Muir, the Director-General of the Army Medical Department, who claimed that there was a decidedly negative effect on men too young or not yet capable of the rigors of duty. The strain of night duty, manoeuvres and heavy work, he stated, was sure to cause a breakdown.¹⁸ In fact, the policy not to enlist the services of men under the age of twenty since they were not yet suited to military life was well established. For this reason, no army on the continent called upon the services of any man under the age of 21.

The report dwelled for a considerable period on the question of the treatment of youths in the army and the impact both on young and old soldiers should their treatment be revised. The committee considered the prospect of reducing the level of work expected of new recruits in their first few months, in terms of the physical fatigues and also the schooling they were required to undertake.¹⁹ This was further extended to limit overseas and active service to men over the age of twenty, classing younger men as 'ineffectual'

¹⁷ Quote from 1881 [c.2791], *Army Reorganisation: Report of a Committee of General and Other Officers of the Army on Army Organisation*, 1881 [c.2791], p.16.

¹⁸ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.16.

¹⁹ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, pp.21-25.

and refraining from including them on the 'effective list'.²⁰ Moreover, the committee expressed concern for the impact over-exertion in the service might have on the health and wellbeing of the men in the ranks. They ran the risk of injuring or even killing young soldiers not physically capable of the duties and fatigues to which they were routinely subjected. Furthermore, should the young men be severely weakened or invalided in the course of their military service, the army would be forced to send its soldiers home, 'with diminished powers for earning their livelihood'.²¹ Here again, the question of the image of the army and of 'Tommy Atkins' as they were perceived by the public weighed on the committee. If the soldier was not seen to be strong, healthy and happy, others would not be encouraged to enlist. The presence of physical wrecks on British streets and the link between their plight and the army would provide further justification for the low social status of the soldiering career.

Concerns the committee held over the general strength and efficiency of the home battalions extended to the training which took place at the regimental depots. Not least because depots tended to be very dull places with only NCO instructors and old soldiers with whom the recruits could converse, there were also reports of the treatment and training of young soldiers varying markedly between establishments.²² In response, the committee suggested that a central depot be established, staffed with specially trained and dedicated instructors and training staff of at least fourteen to fifteen years military experience, placed on 'special duties pay'. The professional instructors would offer consistent and considered treatment, providing a training regime appropriate to the youthful nature of the men receiving it and improving the young recruit's initial

²⁰ This was also intended to benefit the army by rendering the military strength on paper a more accurate representation of the actual manpower strength it possessed.

²¹ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.17.

²² HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.33.

experience of the army.²³ This, it was indicated, would help remedy the high desertion rate by no longer turning men against military life from the outset:

We are of the opinion that many a young soldier, especially if he had been out of work and a little underfed immediately before his enlistment, must have thus acquired a disgust for the service, and it is not improbable that to this and to the injudicious and capricious treatment that they receive at the hands of young and inexperienced non-commissioned officers may be attributed a considerable proportion of the losses from desertion and from the purchase of discharge which takes place in the first few months of a soldier's service.²⁴

The committee hoped that the introduction of a more appropriate and less unpleasant training regime would go some way to reversing the ills they understood the lowest members of the army might suffer thus providing stronger, happier and more dedicated soldiers for the future.

A further issue the establishment of central (or at least regional) training depots was intended to address was fraudulent enlistment. The army was aware that the issue occurred across the country and was somewhat aided by the localisation system. Without effective means of identification and with the potential to enlist multiple times into different regiments, it was possible for fraudulent enlistees to join up and gain the various monetary incentives included and then within a few weeks or months desert only to re-enlist at another regiment, claim the extra pay and repeat the cycle. The regiment named in the application form and the one to which the recruit would duly be sent was then firmly set never to be altered without the soldier's expressed consent. It was one of the few rights a private soldier could claim.²⁵ The tradition protecting soldiers from

²³ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.42.

²⁴ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.24.

²⁵ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.26.

being transferred against their will, though respected by many in the British Army and no doubt the Airey Committee also, did cause one key issue the report sought to remedy.

The committee was not just concerned with the newest members of the army but gave some consideration to the career and prospects of the more senior other ranks. Still concerned with the morale of the soldier and the corresponding appeal of the soldiering career, the report recommended the improvement of the promotion prospects, advocating that all ranks above Private be designated non-commissioned officer and the introduction of the rank of Warrant Officer for Regimental Sergeant-Majors and Quartermaster-Sergeants. Greater benefits would be attached to the redefined ranks including improved uniform and personal clothing for all above Corporal and an additional suit for Regimental Sergeant-Majors.²⁶ The driving focus behind much of the committee's report with regards to the lower ranks was to improve the conditions and prospects which defined their military service. This, it was hoped would encourage better men to remain with the army to act as NCOs and those who left after their short-service period was complete would report favourably back to the civilian world on life in the army and encourage more men of a higher calibre to enlist.

We...feel it our duty to point out that a great part of this expenditure [on men who complete only a limited period in service] tends to demoralise the lower orders of society by encouraging fraudulent enlistment and desertion and to bring the government of this country into disrepute by sending back to civil life a number of men as invalids with impaired health and therefore with diminished prospects of earning their livelihood.²⁷

The presence of invalided soldiers in civil society, their livelihoods inhibited, acted as a further thorn in the side of the army's reputation as an employer. And as the military

²⁶ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.28.

²⁷ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.21.

waded deeper into the competition for manpower within the employment market, it became increasingly aware of the need to keep pace with other large employers in the way it advertised for, recruited and looked after its 'work force'. The ultimate aim remained the eventual rehabilitation of the image and identity of Tommy Atkins in the public mind.

RECRUITMENT: THE CHILDERS REFORMS BEGIN

Concerned with the more practical questions of recruitment, training, discipline, manpower retention and the army's outward image, the committee submitted a number of suggestions intended to enhance or improve those areas of the military organisation. The army struggled to compete in the market for labour against the other large industries and employers and it was failing to overcome the stigma tenaciously clinging to the soldiering image. The committee were well aware of such difficulties and were willing to propound potential remedies. The report presented the crux of the issue as such:

Men who are engaged in trade and regular occupations will not enter the army after they have settled down at the age of 20 to some fixed and steady work, because wages for tradesmen and artisans are so high that men who are earning even labourer's wages, in a steady occupation, will not enter the army as private soldiers; therefore the army must depend for its private soldiers upon the large classes of floating population...who are almost as numerous at 20 years of age as at 17 or 18. The army also depends to a great extent upon young men who have left their homes to seek of employment elsewhere...and who, failing to obtain it, enter the army, and upon others who may have got into scrapes by youthful indiscretions in their native villages. There is also a fair sprinkling of young men who have a taste for the military life, or for seeing foreign countries.²⁸

Aware as the committee was of the realities of the situation faced by the army with respect to manpower resources, it was also open to the necessity of considering and

²⁸ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.25.

recommending some drastic courses of action to modernise the army's systems of recruiting in order to offer some remedy.

The guiding principle of Childers' subsequent reforms to the recruiting system from 1880 - 1882 was the need for the army to conduct its recruiting operations to the same standard as its competitors in the labour market. The army wanted to attract men to the military on the basis of a career, not an escape from hunger or destitution. Determined to remove the stigma of enlisting, Childers reformed the main point of contact which existed between civilians and the army by professionalising the recruiting officers. The committee's strategy to make the military capable of competing with other employers in the domestic labour market was central to the initiatives Childers introduced. Several of its conclusions, including those on the state of recruiting and the prospects open to NCOs would eventually directly inform the initiatives of the War Office between 1880 and 1882. Explaining the philosophy upon which were based the methods proposed by the committee for improved military social standing, the report stated:

By measures to which we shall allude hereafter for improving the advantages of the army and making them better known, we hope that the necessity for resorting to extra ordinary measures to obtain young men of not less than twenty years of age may be obviated. If not, the only means which suggests itself for maintaining an efficient army based upon voluntary service is still further to increase those advantages so as to obtain what is required by only legitimate means, fair competition in the open labour market.²⁹

The committee found fault in many of the systems of the Cardwell Reforms. Localised and rural recruiting in particular was accused of failing to take into account urbanisation as regiments with districts of low population density struggled to adhere to the schemes. Urban recruits continued to provide the primary intake. Furthermore, the districts were

²⁹ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.25.

identified as too large: the paid recruiters working within the district were unlikely to have managed to maintain their regiment to full establishment alone. As a result rural regiments in particular had struggled under the new systems.³⁰

Recruiting staff were also reviewed. They comprised principally of pensioners in large towns with NCOs from the Regulars posted more widely around the districts in order to fulfil Cardwell's aim of combing the country for recruits. This strategy had failed, the report argued, since the recruiting sergeants were rather disinclined to such an existence because of the additional expenses in living they incurred while they were separated from their families. Furthermore, additional recruiting provided by militia members and militia instructors had allegedly proved distasteful to the public, which found militiamen using their position to induce men to enlist rather obnoxious. They were of little use as recruiters as a result.³¹

Other factors exacerbating the recruiting difficulties were cited by the Airey Committee, such as the competition which existed between the Militia and Regular forces for recruiting, as both relied on men of the same class from the same labour market. The Regulars should have priority they argued, since the grounds upon which the Militia might be called out were so limited and that the quality in physique and training of the average militiaman was not to the standard of the regular army. In the event of an emergency, reliance would be placed first and foremost on the Regulars and Reserves.

³⁰ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, pp.30-32.

³¹ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.32.

Having addressed the inefficiency of the existing recruiting system and the damage the poor reputation of recruiters had done to the wider impression of military service in the eyes of the recruit-giving class, the report continued to submit further methods by which the army might better compete for the nation's unskilled labour. Further to suggestions offered by the 1878 Armstrong Report and as Childers was later to realise, its attentions was drawn to the message the army presented to the public - both the method of its delivery and its content.

The recruiting agents themselves, the report reasoned, were to be deployed across the country, as Cardwell had originally envisaged. Although the committee had found little to suggest that the drive to widen the call for recruits across the country - especially rural areas - had met with much success, they continued to favour the strategy, after a fashion. The professional recruiters were to be despatched not only with the remit to find and process recruits, but more broadly to spread information about the advantages of the army and educate the classes they wished to target about the attractions of military life.

The committee, in identifying the need for the army to compete with other employers for unskilled labour, began to acknowledge the necessity that the methods and ethos by which it presented itself would have to match and exceed its competitors were it to stand any chance of attracting sufficient interest. Furthermore, the commitment and sacrifice military service required of the individual would require the army to rely even more on its advertising and persuasive prowess to convince applicants that the rewards were worth it. As the report stated;

We find that there is no difficulty on the part of civil contractors for large public works, not requiring a high class of labour, in obtaining any

number of men they may require; it should however be observed that men engaging for the army yield up their liberty for a lengthened period, whereas in civil life men retain full freedom. The whole question is, in our opinion, one of terms, and the manner in which those terms are placed before the labouring population of the country.³²

One of the key vehicles by which Childers would seek to achieve the dissemination of such knowledge was through the printed pamphlet entitled *The Advantages of the Army* which was issued to recruiters and deposited in post offices as an initial source of information for potential enlistees. The sole focus of this literature was to present in a clear and unadorned manner the pay, lifestyle, promotion and pension prospects available to men serving in the ranks. Far from attempting to seduce men into enlisting, the pamphlet read as a straightforward agreement or trade – outlining what a man could hope to receive in return for service in the army. Despite being an integral component however, *The Advantages of the Army* pre-figured that which was issued under Childers's reformed recruiting system.

The Airey Committee, in the process of reviewing the methods of recruiting in place in 1879 directed a great deal of criticism towards the pre-Childers pamphlet. Like the exaggerated and untruthful tales of military life spun as bait by the recruiting sergeants in the towns and villages, the *Advantages of the Army* also boasted possible benefits based very loosely on the truth to entice men into the service; and just as the dishonesty of the recruiting sergeants encouraged mistrust and ill feeling among locals towards their presence, the misleading information of the recruiting pamphlet bred discontentment from within and contempt from without.

³² HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.25.

The misnomers, the report found, varied from trivial matters such as the competitiveness of canteen prices, to more serious issues such as post-service employment opportunities. The promise that commodities at the canteen such as beer and tobacco would be cheaper was no longer appropriate in light of the cooperative societies now in existence the committee argued. And while the suggestion that there existed the opportunity to learn a trade in the army by which one could earn a living after discharge was true in respect of boys joining as tailors and musicians, it was not so in the case of the majority who would leave with no applicable trade. Furthermore, the assertion that positions were constantly given to ex-soldiers by the Police, the railways, the Post Office and the Civil Service, though relatively accurate, failed to clarify that such appointments were achieved purely by the efforts of the individual; the government offered no assistance.³³ Discovering that all was not quite as it had been promised however soon bred resentment within the ranks. The report concluded:

The discovery soon after joining the service that these vague statements, so far as the government is concerned, are misleading, tends to shake their confidence in the state as their employers, and we, therefore, are of the opinion they should be discontinued, and that only precise clear statements should be placed before the public, which any man of moderate education should be able to understand without fear of mistake.³⁴

The identity of the soldier and the way in which the men were treated were closely intertwined; the Airey Committee recognised the need for the state to be seen to improve its attitude to the private soldier in order to encourage the public that the soldiering career was a good one. If the state was known to mislead men into enlisting there would be detrimental consequences. The soldier, considering himself to have been trapped into

³³ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.29.

³⁴ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.29.

military life would be prone to disillusionment and no-longer desirous of an exemplary military career. Moreover, the recruit-giving classes, upon learning of the state's treatment of its soldiers, could never hope to see the value in the army as a profession.

The report also expressed concerns over *The Advantages of the Army* pamphlet not just in terms of its content, but also its presentation. With the rate of the nation's literacy rising rapidly and the ever-present desire to attract a higher class of recruit to the colours, the committee found it counterintuitive to persist with a piece of literature which was unclear and poorly structured.

Considering the general advancement of education in the country, it would seem useless to attempt to lure good men into the ranks by vague, undefined statements of possible advantages. What is required is a clear, concise statement of the terms of contract and of any positions of profit or employment which the government can secure to retired soldiers.³⁵

The committee advocated the pamphlet be re-written and composed around a more tabular structure in which the various facets of information essential to understanding what a career in the army could offer was clearly and concisely presented before the reader. Furthermore, beyond seeking to provide suitable access to information for potential recruits, the committee was also concerned that the information was readily available to the recruiting officers. Under the present system, they argued, the process of ascertaining sufficient information to answer many of the questions an intelligent man might ask with regards to his prospects was so complicated that it was unlikely that the recruiter would be able to respond satisfactorily. Any answer they offered, it was feared, would be full of 'doubtful contingencies sufficient to alarm any thoughtful man.'³⁶ *The*

³⁵ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, pp.28-29.

³⁶ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.29.

Advantages of the Army should offer a convenient handbook to which recruiting officers could refer for current facts and information.

CONCLUSION

The major recommendations of the Airey Commission were largely unrealised when the Childers Reforms commenced. This was in part due to reactionary elements within the committee's report as previous scholars have suggested. Another reason however, was the scale the suggestions proffered. The Airey report was in part the senior officers' wish list. The Airey Committee's report was completed in the spring of 1880, only a couple of months before the Conservative Secretary of State Stanley left the War Office when the Liberals returned to power. The politician realistically placed to act upon their recommendations was his successor, Childers. In the hands of a Liberal committed to retrenchment, the possibilities were greatly reduced. The committee called for the reversal of the linked battalion system for the sake of the weakened home battalions and the impact of cross-posting on regimental *esprit de corps*, despite the three-and-a-half million pounds already incurred in its development.³⁷ As French notes, the issue of expenditure did ultimately influence Childers' decision to proceed and cement Cardwell's linked battalions rather than to disband them.³⁸

However, as the previous chapter has argued, the interim between Cardwell and Childers was of far greater influence than has previously been argued. The Taylor, Armstrong and Airey Committees, though differing in scale and remit, maintain the pulse of reform, reviewing Cardwell's schemes and seeking further enhancement. Far from an

³⁷ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.43.

³⁸ French, *Military Identities*, p.20.

irrelevance, as this chapter has demonstrated, the report Airey produced presented the framework around which Childers would base many of his reforms over the next two years. Recommendations advocating the modernisation of the recruiting service and the legitimisation of the military career developed through the Airey Commission as the army demonstrated a growing awareness of the necessity to present an appealing career prospect if respectable recruits were to be gained. As Chapter 3 will demonstrate, the Childers Reforms were greatly influenced by this approach.

CHAPTER THREE

HUGH CHILDERS AND THE

MODERNISATION OF THE RECRUITING SYSTEM 1880 – 1892

INTRODUCTION

The War Office under Hardy and Stanley maintained a continuous dialogue in which the treatment and corresponding social status of the soldier was considered and further improvements discussed. It culminated in the second wave of reforms under the Liberal Secretary of State for War Hugh Childers between 1880 and 1882. Though the Childers Reforms certainly sought to remedy some of the defects now apparent in Cardwell's schemes, the details of which are well established by existing scholarship, their application was far more extensive. The initiatives suggested by the Taylor, Armstrong and Airey Committees formed the foundation of a renewed period of reform. The measures implemented by Childers which sought to address the army's recruiting difficulties had a profound impact on the social standing of the soldier, or at least, so it was intended. Chapter 3 will examine the War Office initiatives which attempted to redefine 'the soldier' in the early 1880s.

Childers had some experience in the political governance of the military. When Cardwell was at the War Office, Childers was First Lord of the Admiralty. He had overseen a series of reforms to the Royal Navy which, like Cardwell's at the War Office, had aimed to increase economy and efficiency. He restructured and streamlined the Admiralty Board, introduced a new programme for ship building and a new policy

for the promotion and retirement of naval officers.¹ An efficient but colourless politician, Childers was well prepared for the task of further reforming the army.²

The schemes devised and implemented during the 1880-2 Liberal Government have for the most part played second fiddle to the earlier, deeper reforms of 1868-74 in scholarship on the late-Victorian army. As French notes, the Childers Reforms delivered a series of schemes intended to ‘humanise the service’ and encourage a higher class of recruit to enlist.³ The labour and capital already invested in Cardwell’s schemes made them almost impossible to scrap leaving Childers with little option but to take the reforms one stage further by territorialising the regiments. The regiments linked by Cardwell were given county titles officially and their number designations removed. The two regiments became the first and second battalions and the local auxiliary units – the Militia and Volunteers the third and fourth respectively. Childers also increased short service to seven years in the hope of avoiding young soldiers passing into the Reserves just as they reached their prime.⁴

The bulk of these reforms came in 1881 when the pay, prospects and pensions of the ordinary soldier were marginally improved. Particular attention was paid to the living conditions and prestige of the NCOs, the likes of whom the army had been struggling to retain. The more prestigious ranks of Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) and Regimental Quarter-Master Sergeant (RQMS) were created for the most senior NCOs. For soldiers of those ranks, the full twenty-one year service and corresponding pension

¹ W. Carr, ‘Childers, Hugh Culling Eardley (1827–1896)’, rev. H. C. G. Matthew, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn., Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5296, accessed 7 Sept. 2012].

² Carr, ‘Childers, Hugh Culling Eardley’.

³ French, *Military Identities*, p.20.

⁴ French, *Military Identities*, pp.18- 21.

were guaranteed and full marrying rights were bestowed. For more junior sergeants, separate and superior barracks from those occupied by the lower ranks were established. Half were permitted to marry, compared to only 4 to 7 per cent of the other ranks. Also, responsibility for maintaining the main barracks fell to the corporals and lance-corporals.⁵ Methods of discipline were also revised with the abolition of flogging finally becoming absolute and the terms of offenses and punishments clarified.⁶

The reforms by Childers listed above have already been examined in detail, most notably by French.⁷ They constitute measures taken to directly enhance the lifestyle and distinction of the soldier in the hope of raising the status of the NCO in particular to something more akin to commissioned officers. By adding some glamour to the profession, respectable working class men might have been encouraged to view the army as a career with prospects. Coupled with a more generalised improvement in the treatment of the other ranks, the aim was to move the soldier away from the negative stereotype of a low, semi-criminal entity to one respected within the institution and, therefore, outside it also.

Childers was, however, also instrumental in encouraging and overseeing a holistic reorganisation and professionalisation of the recruiting system and methods of military-civilian interaction. The necessity of such measures had been identified throughout the 1870s and finally endorsed fully by the Airey Report published in 1880. Their introduction has not been considered by historians examining this period in the army's

⁵ French, *Military Identities*, p.21.

⁶ French, *Military Identities*, pp.24-25; the practice of flogging had been restricted in 1868 to cases of mutiny and violence to a superior officer. It continued to garner a great deal of criticism in civilian circles however for its barbarism.

⁷ See 'The Cardwell-Childers Reforms and the Recreation of the Regimental System' in French, *Military Identities*, pp. 10-30.

development however, primarily because the foundation of the Childers's reforms lay in the consolidation of Cardwell's. Therefore, they have traditionally been viewed within the confines of those earlier schemes alone. The measures headed by Childers in the early 1880s have particular significance to the wider focus of this thesis. They delineated the movement which would encourage a continuing purpose within the military and the government to redefine the soldier's identity and social status.

THE MODERNISATION OF BRITISH ARMY RECRUITING

French cites the integration of the territorial regiment into the county identity as fundamental in Childers's attempt to revive the army's tarnished reputation.⁸ Localised recruiting was intended to increase military-social integration, creating a level of cohesion between the regiment and the county. It was hoped that recruits would follow friends, family and local heroes into the Colours, instilling local pride in the service. Recruiting districts also enabled the army to pursue a comprehensive recruiting drive across the entire country in the hope of countering the effects of urbanisation and prolonging a reliance on the preferred rural recruit.

The territorialized regiment and corresponding recruiting district could not have operated without support however. The home battalion, whose role it was to recruit, train and supply men for its sister battalions abroad, was consistently under establishment, had numerous additional duties and was often engaged in home tours around the UK and Ireland. With the exception of regiments with small recruiting districts encompassing large urban centres, the system appears somewhat implausible. However, there is a large omission in our understanding of the system Childers

⁸ French, *Military Identities*, p.34.

implemented in 1881. The battalion was never intended to shoulder the burden of localised recruiting alone. The system of recruiting was in fact reviewed and restructured by the War Office under Childers more extensively than existing scholarship has suggested. The system was multi-faceted; there were three main initiatives intended to operate independently of each other and as part of a larger, mutually supportive network.

At its core was the county regiment and corresponding recruiting district. However, this was to be supported and maintained by the first tier of the War Office's recruitment system, the professional recruiting service. This in turn was supported by the second level of the army's enlistment system, which saw the General Post Office (GPO) utilised for advertising and recruiting purposes. Finally, both the professional recruiting service and the GPO were supported by a national advertising campaign in the press.



The revised recruiting system of the British Army c.1882.

THE PROFESSIONAL RECRUITING SERVICE

As the diagram above demonstrates, the first link in the chain of support to have existed beyond the county regiment was the professional recruiting service. The new scheme, introduced under 'General Order Recruiting 27, No.4539', was devised in 1881 and scheduled to begin operation with the territorial regiments by 1882.⁹ The system was intended to enable NCOs selected to recruit for the regiment to do so professionally. Employed under the orders of the regimental recruiting officer, their sole duty was to conduct recruiting efforts in the district. Termed 'paid recruiters', they were not only excused from all other duties within the regiment, but received extra duty-pay as well being eligible to the 'bringers fee' which was offered to any person or persons instrumental in a successful recruitment.

The recruiting district was divided into sections and allocated to a single NCO recruiter. Their duties included not only establishing contact with potential recruits and processing their applications but various additional tasks relating to publicity. It was the paid recruiter's responsibility to ensure the call for recruits was well disseminated. This entailed the maintenance of posters, monitoring newspaper advertisements and supporting the advertising and enlistment scheme which operated concurrently through the GPO. It was in effect, the establishment of a professional service dedicated to recruitment. The paid recruiters did not necessarily have territorial connections and operated in support of the regimental recruiting district. Childers also planned for men

⁹ TNA: WO 32/6886: RECRUITING: General (Code 25(A)): Arrangements for increasing rate of recruitment: Advertising in Post Offices and Press. Use of paid recruiters. Expenses involved.

in the Reserves to play a smaller role assisting recruiting in their local areas and supporting the paid recruiter where possible.¹⁰

The development of a modern recruiting service is an important component of the Childers Reforms. The focus of regimental recruiting on the districts provided in the Localisation Acts was unsustainable without a dedicated team responsible for its operation. To service such distances as those covered by the recruiting districts required a great deal more attention than a battalion could afford in addition to its other duties. Furthermore, as the Airey Committee had identified, the employment of members of the Volunteers or pensioners was not appropriate as members of the public disliked being approached by non-professional soldiers and the expenses incurred by the individual were high.¹¹ The system, as present historiography currently presents it, was essentially the shell of the organisation introduced by Childers and illogical in practice. ‘General Order 27’ provided the workings.

This is not to suggest that the regiment did not contribute directly to recruiting efforts. The home battalion still bore responsibility for recruitment and training in order to supply their sister battalion with drafts.. This was often achieved through the use of spectacle and ceremonial displays. Military bands were popular in the nineteenth century as were parades and demonstrations.¹² Indeed, a key objective of the Localisation Act was the establishment of county-regiment ties in which local events, fetes and festivals presented a vital opportunity to create such bonds. Even following the Childers Reforms, regiments continued to recruit actively when it was most

¹⁰ TNA: WO 32/6886: RECRUITING.

¹¹ HCCP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p.32.

¹² Streets, *Martial Races*, p.189.

advantageous but the responsibility did not rest solely on the shoulders of the home battalion. The dedicated recruiting sergeants would be capable of providing a consistent and organised coverage of the recruiting district.

The professionalised recruiting service also addressed an image problem for the army. The recruiting officer had gained a potentially negative persona in British society. The nickname 'Sergeant Kite', originating from a disreputable character in the play *The Recruiting Officer* by George Farquhar (1706) was bestowed on the personification of the individual, reflecting how acute a source of distrust and hatred they had become.¹³ It compounded many of the negative sentiments of the army. Known for being devious and dishonest, Sergeant Kite had encapsulated the predatory nature of recruiters over the centuries. *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post* gave an account of Sergeant Kite in an article published in March 1883:

Their unblushing misrepresentations have been made the theme of many a story, some humorous and not a few sad. The system they represented was unworthy of the country. It was cruel to the victims many of whom in a moment of exasperation at the deceptions practiced upon them offended against the law and turned a career that might have been creditable and advantageous into one of disgrace and misery and of trouble and loss to the country.¹⁴

Childers had hoped to re-educate the public in the character and value of the soldier and to encourage men to enlist through open and honest means, countering the self-perpetuating prejudice that the army was a career preferable only to the workhouse. The reliance of large proportions of a recruiting officer's pay on the number of recruits they tallied undoubtedly contributed to the disreputable practices upon which they were known to rely. Childers's paid recruiters would receive higher pay than their colleagues

¹³ G. Farquhar, *The Recruiting Officer* (London: 1706).

¹⁴ 'Recruiting in the Army', in the *Bristol and Daily Post* (7 March 1883), issue 10861.

and were excused from all other duties. They were chosen for the position on account of a good record of conduct and retained on condition that that it remained so. It was hoped such conditions would ensure the new army representatives were trustworthy and would encourage an acceptable standard of conduct.

Attempts to remedy the evils of un-monitored recruiting were noted in the press and while 'General Order 27' did not achieve immediate or absolute success in reforming public opinion, the War Office's efforts were appreciated and regard for the army as an institution improved a fraction. The *Bristol and Daily Post* praised the new system:

That change abolished Sergeant Kite and all his works. The recruiting agents of whom he was the type were remunerated according to the number of youths they could decoy into the service...It is a relief to know that we have changed all that. Recruiters do not now depend for their livelihood upon the number of men they can catch.¹⁵

While the public may not grow to quickly like the army, it was important for them to stop fearing and distrusting its presence and that of its representatives on the street and in the taverns. The removal of public animosity, readily identified by successive military reformers including the Airey Committee, constituted the principal foundation of the scheme.¹⁶ It sought the recasting of the recruiting sergeant as a non-threatening presence in local communities. Coordinating and complementing wider advances made by the regiment towards the public, the professional recruiter was intended to act, if not as an advert in himself, then as a face of the army and a human point of contact. By association, preconceptions of what and whom populated the ranks might be redirected to encompass the familiar and respected recruiting officer.

¹⁵ 'Recruiting in the Army', in the *Bristol and Daily Post* (7 March 1883), issue 10861.

¹⁶ HCPP: Airey, *Army Reorganisation*, p 32.

THE GENERAL POST OFFICE

Ultimately, the reforms to recruiting were aimed at public education in the advantages a military career, reinforced by a newly intrinsic sense of trust and readily accessible information. Further to the recruiting service, this was sought through the GPO. Even with a network of dedicated paid recruiters, the obstacles of urbanisation and a poor public rapport were too great to be overcome by the regimental system and paid recruiters alone. The most innovative of the schemes to be introduced during the 1880-2 reforms, Childers utilised the premises and the reputation of the GPO to aid and enhance the army's recruitment.

The GPO by the latter-half of the nineteenth century occupied both a functional and symbolic place in British society. The organisation was state-run and its director, the Postmaster General, was a cabinet position. The GPO was the first port of call for numerous functions of daily life, as well as its normal functions of dealing with letters and parcels. The GPO was a status symbol for the nation, a sign of civilisation and industry. It helped to maintain Great Britain at the centre of her Empire and imbued strongly with the iconography of the monarchy and with its accoutrements blazoned scarlet, it was a potent representation of the nation state.¹⁷ Furthermore, the department was well versed in assisting with the business of several other government departments including the Home and Colonial Offices and the Emigration Board.¹⁸

In June 1882, the War Office stated in a letter to the Postmaster General that:

¹⁷ C. Fitzpatrick, 'An Opportunity for the Exercise of the National Fancy': the 1912 Home Rule Bill and the Post Office in Ireland', unpublished paper (Plymouth University: School of History and Art History Research Seminar Series, 11 Feb. 2015).

¹⁸ Royal Mail Museum and Archives (Hereafter RMMA): POST 30/647: Mr Fawcett in response to Lord Hartington on the role of the GPO in assisting other Government departments.

The object in view in making the Post Office the medium of application for enlistment was to elevate the service in the eyes of the public, to make its advantages more generally known and to give greater facilities to candidates.¹⁹

The War Office's intention was twofold. The first was to aid in recruitment, enhancing the professionalised recruiting service. The War Office provided the GPO with a set of documents with which to equip the post offices. Each postmaster was instructed to display a notice drawing attention to the fact that recruitment could now be conducted through the GPO. Posters were also provided to give the army added presence and publicity. The War Office supplied a small recruiting brochure which set out the terms and conditions of service and issued stocks of recruitment forms which could be obtained and returned at the individual's convenience. This bypassed the recruiting officer if desired, countering reservations about approaching the officer outright. Applicants were to be forwarded by the postmaster to either the local recruiting officer or the commanding officer of the nearest regimental depot where the paperwork would be received and the process of attestation began.

Establishing the GPO as a point of contact for recruitment had the further benefit that it expanded the recruiting capabilities of the army tremendously. The military continued to favour and seek rural and agricultural recruits. Where the localised regimental system had widened the army's reach by ensuring every region of the country had a recruiting presence, the GPO provided a recognisable and permanent anchorage for those efforts. In 1880 the GPO, controlled 612 Head Offices under which operated 6,060 money order and 7,240 non-money order offices, totalling 14,212 post offices in the United Kingdom. This number would rise consistently in the next few decades as sub offices in

¹⁹ RMMA: POST 30/647: Sub-File X: *Army Recruitment Notices*.

particular multiplied at a rate of approximately 500 offices per year, reaching 20,270 by 1895.²⁰ Almost every town and village included a post office of some description.

Through those establishments the presence of the army was expanded in a manner no individual recruiter could manage. The information and means necessary for enlistment was now readily available to every man in the country, no matter how remote his location. It was considerable financial commitment on the part of the War Office which was solely responsible for providing the printing and distribution means and supplying subsequent replacements. It was estimated that around 16,700 notices alone would be required. The scheme came into operation on the 1st July 1881.²¹

It was not simply the physical presence of the GPO which Childers hoped to utilise. The War Office's ongoing rehabilitation of the soldier's image and the army's presence British society was also an intended beneficiary of the overt links the War Office hoped to establish with the GPO. The postal service had a familiarity and credibility which the army did not have. Both could be viewed as symbols of the Empire but the post office had a constructive and benevolent influence overseas and an invaluable role at home, the army did not. Childers hoped that through association with the GPO the army and the regimental system might enjoy added credibility.

The GPO's credibility was not simply to transform perceptions of the soldier by association however. Through the recruiting pamphlet, *The Advantages of the Army: Conditions on which Young Men are Invited to Join her Majesty's Regular Forces*, with

²⁰ RMMA: POST 30/647: Sub-File VI: *Annual Organisation Report*, (Editions 1880 – 1900), p. 2.

²¹ RMMA: POST 30/647: Sub-File X: *Army Recruitment Notices*.

which the postmasters were equipped, the movement to legitimise the recruiting system took another step.²² It was a publication which would see reissue and redesign numerous times between 1880 and the outbreak of the Great War. The Airey Committee had criticised its predecessor for insufficient accuracy. The new version to be distributed to post offices was intended to be functional. It set forth plainly the terms and conditions of service for the entire army.

The persuasive tact employed in the *Advantages of the Army* is striking in its contrast to the approach traditionally associated with the recruiting sergeant. The pursuit of legitimacy is keenly apparent. The career of the soldier is presented in terms of commitment and remuneration. There is a complete absence of any allusion to the glory of battle, past campaigns or military heroes. The terms and conditions of the soldier are presented as a job and as a career. The pamphlet operated much as a modern-day recruiting brochure, providing the applicant with many of the pertinent facts required when considering enlisting.²³ The object was for the recruit to be fully aware of what he could expect upon enlisting in order to distance the army from the deceitful recruiting practices which had so tarnished its reputation.²⁴ The pamphlet operated much as a modern-day recruiting brochure, providing the applicant with many of the pertinent facts required when considering enlisting.²⁵

The post office recruiting scheme ran satisfactorily for a year. The GPO allowed for the necessary notices, posters and documentation to be distributed to its offices and

²² RMMA: POST: 30/647: Sub-File XI: *Army Recruitment Notices*.

²³ RMMA: POST: 30/647: Sub-File XI: *Army Recruitment Notices*.

²⁴ 'An NCO' in the *Morning Post*, London (2 February 1883), issue 34489.

²⁵ RMMA: POST: 30/647: Sub-File XI: *Army Recruitment Notices*.

passively facilitated the army's recruitment.²⁶ This initial success prompted the War Office to seek additional assistance. In 1882 Childers, recognising the valuable local knowledge postmasters possessed, contacted the Postmaster-General in the hope that the post office might act as a filter of bad characters.²⁷ The scheme echoed the original Prussian design which had influenced Cardwell in his localisation of the regiments, relying on the knowledge of the local gentry-come-officers to ensure the best men were selected and conducted themselves appropriately.²⁸

The War Office proposed that an additional section be added to the supplied application form which would act as a certificate of reference endorsing the applicant's character and his suitability to join the military. The payment of a 'bringers fee' of five shillings for an enlistment into the Regulars and two shillings for a militiaman was offered.²⁹ Initially the Postmaster-General, the respected economist Sir Henry Fawcett, refused Childers's request. The GPO had only consented to the War Office's original proposals, he argued, on the condition that the scheme did not interfere with or distract from the postmasters' primary duties. The offer of remuneration in particular was perceived as incentive for the postmasters to prioritise recruitment over the existing duties.³⁰ Despite repeat assurances from Childers that the War Office would endeavour not to distract the Postal staff, the request was again denied in August 1882.³¹

²⁶ RMMA: POST: 30/647: Sub-File II: *Army Recruitment Notices*.

²⁷ RMMA: POST: 30/647: Sub-File X: *Army Recruitment Notices*.

²⁸ Brackenbury, 'The Military Systems of Prussia and France in 1870', pp.7–11.

²⁹ RMMA: POST: 30/647: Sub-File X: *Army Recruitment Notices*.

³⁰ RMMA: POST: 30/647: Sub-File X: *Army Recruitment Notices*.

³¹ RMMA: POST: 30/647:Sub-File X: *Army Recruitment Notices*.

PRESS ADVERTISING

The War Office's reforms to recruiting extended into one final tier. Building on the presence of the regiment, professional recruiters and poster advertising and recruiting through the GPO, the final sphere of influence came in the form of the press. £5,000 had been approved to cover the War Office's advertising work. Childers and the Inspector-General of Recruiting Edward Bulwer apportioned £3,000 of that budget to develop an advertising presence in the British newspapers.³² Through Government publishers R. F. White and Son, 145 newspapers were selected and an advertisement designed. Only local and London publications were selected. This reflected in part the absence of a true national press in 1882.³³ More importantly, the reformers wanted the advertising campaign to achieve as broad an influence as possible, continuing with the War Office's more general strategy of localisation. Advertising in the local press, it was reasoned, maintained the regional impetus of the recruiting drive and ensured publications with a provincial influence were utilised.³⁴

The distribution of publications to feature an army advertisement were as follows: London (8 papers), Scotland (25 papers), England (75 papers), Wales (10 papers) and Ireland (27 papers); a total initially of 145 newspapers.³⁵ A newspaper from every major town and city in the country was selected, varying from weekly to bi-weekly and in some cases monthly issues. Care was taken to avoid publishing in newspapers with the same readership, for instance the (daily) *Scotsman* and the *Weekly Scotsman*. Press

³² TNA: WO 32/6886: (Advertising), Drawn from minutes and correspondence between the Adjutant General, Secretary of State for War and various members of the committee formed to consider the advertisement of the army, from the National Archives.

³³ TNA: WO 32/6886: (Advertising), There were publications such as *The Times* but as Chapter 5 discusses, that publication had an elite readership and was referenced extensively by other smaller publications.

³⁴ TNA: WO 32/6886: (Advertising).

³⁵ TNA: WO 32/6886: (Advertising).

advertising was introduced to support the modernisation of the recruiting system which sought to enhance recruiting as a whole. As with the recruiting literature available through the post offices, the infantry were not the sole beneficiary in this case, with reference made to the army as a whole and areas with cavalry and Guards regiments targeted as well as infantry districts.

What the War Office and their publishers created was not dynamic, or attractive. Unlike larger advertisements which could occasionally appear throughout the newspaper, the classified advertisements were densely packed, poorly defined and devoid of order and structure. A. R. Skelley is particularly critical in his assessment of recruiting during this period for its unimaginative and uninspiring tone and appearance.³⁶ Their presence in the classifieds is further diminished by the inconsistency with where the advert was placed. Rarely did they appear in the same position twice. Nor was there, for some time, an image, crest or emblem to emblazon the head of the advert. As a result, the entry appeared ineffectual, even by the standards of the time.

One reason for this simplistic and inelegant style was the expense the scheme rapidly accumulated. Despite the £3,000 budget set aside from an initial £5,000 for advertising costs, after the first wave of advertisements the War Office and their publishers were struggling to complete their work for under £5,000 on newspapers alone.³⁷ Distribution was key and despite limiting the variety, frequency and geographical concentration of newspapers as far as possible, it was unlikely the War Office could achieve the range they desired with the budget they possessed. A second reason lay in the passive

³⁶ Skelley, *Victorian Army at Home*, p.240.

³⁷ TNA: WO 32/6886: (Advertising), Correspondence between R. F. White and Son General Publishing Agents and Mr. P. Hughes of the War Office, 21 April 1882.

approach to recruiting which was intended for the recruiting service as a whole. Understatement was a fundamental part of the strategy. The War Office wanted to move away from the associations of 'Sergeant Kite' and accusations of dishonesty and manipulation in acquiring recruits. The advert was intended simply as a signpost directing potential applicants' attention to the opportunities the army offered and the presence of the post office as a point of further contact.

The press was used by the War Office on numerous occasions which, in addition to the long-term and regular advertising presence, sought to draw further attention to the army and the changes that were taking place. The involvement of the GPO in recruitment had been highlighted, for instance, in a brief advertisement which stated:

SERVICE IN THE ARMY – A Statement showing the advantages of serving in the army, the conditions of service, pay & c. and also forms of application to enlist can now be obtained at every Post Office in the United Kingdom. War Office, August 1881.³⁸

Larger articles conveyed the War Office's message more directly. Half advertisement, half statement, they sought to convey the professional opportunities a respectable man enlisting in the army could expect, even highlighting the small percentage of commissions awarded to members of the other ranks. It began, 'In a memorandum relative to recruiting which has been issued from the War Office it is stated among other advantages of the army that the following commissions are given to deserving officers...'.³⁹ Continuing with the War Office's policy of functionality, the article listed the various ranks and positions a man could obtain in the Regular Army as well as the Indian Army, the Militia and Yeomanry noting the pay received by each one. It concluded:

³⁸ 'Army Advertisement' in *The Standard*, London (15 September 1881).

³⁹ From *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, Bristol (6 August 1881).

Young men who contemplate joining the army are further reminded of the other advantages presented to the soldier in the shape of good conduct pay, deferred pay and pension, prizes for good shooting & c., the use of recreation rooms and canteens and the opportunities of learning a trade. The pay, rations, lodging and clothing of the ordinary soldier is pronounced equivalent to 15s a week not reckoning the £3 which is saved for him as deferred pay.⁴⁰

The press was the final tier of the new recruiting system devised by the War Office under Childers. It completed a system which was intended to modernise and legitimise the way in which the army conducted its recruiting. The schemes remained in operation for the remainder of the nineteenth century, albeit with adjustments and alterations. The GPO took a varying degree of participation in the recruitment of the British Army, the extent of which depended on the Postmaster-General and his relationship with the incumbent Secretary of State for War. When Lord Hartington succeeded Childers for instance, additions to the application form originally denied by Fawcett were provisionally approved. From February 1884, Postmasters began contributing their local knowledge to help the army filter out undesirable men, though it was on a voluntary basis. The system continued until 1888 when the additional certificate was removed once more.⁴¹

The press advertising campaign also enjoyed longevity with modification. As early as 1883, one year after the original advertisement, a revision was circulated. The new example had been condensed, presumably for the sake of cost, with the opening paragraph unchanged but the remainder of the advert presenting periods of service, promotion, pay and pensions removed and replaced with the following notice:

⁴⁰ 'Army Advertisement' in *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post* (12 August 1881).

⁴¹ RMMA: POST: 30/647: Sub-File III: *Army Recruitment Notices*.

Great Prospects of promotion are offered to eligible young men. Applications can be made, either personally or by letter to the officer commanding the regimental district at... or the nearest Volunteer Sergeant Instructor or other recruiter. Recruits, if eligible can be enlisted for any arm of the Regular Service they may select.⁴²

The advertisements appeared throughout the 1880s, though in ever-decreasing length as paragraphs were cut to be replaced by the *Advantages of the Army* pamphlet. They ceased periodically depending on their necessity and cost. Regiments also advertised locally, independent of the War Office, with a noticeably different tone and approach. The fastidiously functional central adverts were replaced by rather more striking ones and aimed at certain sections of society, especially the unemployed, as was the case in the *Liverpool Mercury* in March 1892:

Men under 25 seeking employment should apply to Major Forrest, Rupert-Lane Barracks, Liverpool, or for pamphlet "Advantages of the Army" free at any Post Office; good pay, free kit, liberal diet and hours of recreation, weekly pocket money from 3s to 5s.⁴³

Localisation also experienced difficulties as the variation in recruiting districts was considerable and in some cases the population density was not sufficient to maintain a regiment of exclusively local composition. Regiments in rural areas in particular contended with the rapid urbanisation of the nineteenth century. In such cases, recruitment was heightened when the home battalions were stationed in areas of high population, especially major cities and ports. The Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry (DCLI) for example, managed to maintain an average of only 12.1% Cornishmen in their ranks in the remaining decades of the nineteenth century.⁴⁴ Recruits from within their district constituted a regular yearly intake which rose slightly in the winter months and following poor harvests. Recruits from outside the district enlisted on a more

⁴² 'Army Advertisement' in the *Preston Guardian* (6 August 1883).

⁴³ 'Army Advertisement' in the *Liverpool Mercury* (12 March 1892).

⁴⁴ French, *Military Identities*, pp.59-60.

sporadic basis and in groups, primarily from fertile areas such as London, Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Cork and Dublin, through the recruiting efforts of the home battalion and small recruiting parties posted around the United Kingdom.⁴⁵ Colonel Swiney noted these realities for the DCLI in his history of the regiment published in 1893:

The average number of recruits that joined between June and December [1884] was fifty-one per month. The majority were posted from the recruiting parties and sent direct to the regiment. Among them, there were very few West-Countrymen, and of these but a small number were from Cornwall. They were principally from the neighbourhood in which the regiment had been stationed, vis. from Surrey and London. A few recruits were however, derived from the Midland counties.⁴⁶

However, the territorial system, through strength and through weakness, remained in operation thereafter. Its benefits would be seen more acutely in the Great War.

The Childers Reforms and the modernisation of the recruiting system were not directly targeted at the soldier. Instead, they were an attempt to transform public perceptions of what being a soldier meant, what it involved and why a young man would choose such employment. The army was not concerned for the soldier directly, but it wished to address the low social status attributed to the ordinary ranks which was seen to have a negative impact of the army's ability to recruit. By legitimising the recruiting service and the presence of the army in public places, the War Office believed that the soldier would in turn be legitimised and enjoy an improvement in social status.

⁴⁵ E. Gosling, 'The Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry: Recruiting a Rural Regiment' (University of Kent: BA Dissertation, 2008), p.17.

⁴⁶ G. C. Swiney, Colonel. *Historical Records: 32nd DCLI* (Devonport: 1893), p.229

The conclusion of the Childers Reforms in 1882 did not spell an end to the debate over how best to popularise the army. As the need to recruit good quality men in sufficient numbers continued to press the War Office, so the theorising continued also. The debate over how best to popularise the army continued well into the late-1880s and early-1890s and further innovations in recruitment and public relations were attempted. Recruiting trends continued to follow seasonal peaks and troughs, but having fallen considerably in 1887 from 39,409 (24,974 for the infantry) in 1886 to 31,225 (infantry 19,262), the figures continued to lag behind what the War Office had hoped. By 1890 the total intake achieved was still only 31,407 (19,296 for the infantry). 1891 saw a further decrease of 384 men from the army strength, a drop attributed to an unusually large number of transfers to the Reserves.⁴⁷ To keep pace, the War Office throughout the 1880s introduced sporadic initiatives to aid civilian-military relations. For instance, recruiting offices were established in areas without barracks. Located in areas with strong working class communities, they offered a visible and secure base for the army to which men could make enquiries.⁴⁸

A committee appointed to inquire into the, ‘terms and conditions of service in the army’, was appointed in 1891. It sought to review the existing inducements to enter the army; the length and conditions of service with the Colours and the Reserve; and the advantages available on discharge.⁴⁹ Chaired by Baron Wantage, an agriculturalist, retired army Captain and Lieutenant-Colonel of Volunteers, the committee included General Sir Edward Earle Gascoyne Bulwer whom, as Inspector-General of Recruiting

⁴⁷ HCPP: *Army and Militia: Annual Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting for 1890*, 1890-91, [c.6275], 97.147, p.10.

⁴⁸ HCPP: *Annual Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting for 1890*, p.10.

⁴⁹ TNA: WO 32/6294: R. Wantage, Baron, *Conditions of Service (Other Ranks): General (Code 72(A)): Report of the Wantage Committee on Terms and Conditions of Service in the Army 1891 – 1892*, p.2.

(1880-86), had been instrumental in the Childers Reforms. The appointment confirms that the reform debate was far from extinguished. In many respects, however, the report represents an epilogue rather than an extension to Cardwell-Childers Reforms. Whilst the fundamental concerns present in the 1870s and early 1880s were reviewed, the committee's recommendations, which largely centred on greater financial investment in soldiers, were not realised for reasons of expense.

The recommendations made in the Wantage report highlight the extent to which the Cardwell-Childers Reforms had in some respects progressed and in others stalled by the early 1890s. The recruiting system featured prominently. Whilst admitting that the current system, when administered correctly, was the most suitable, the committee suggested that there were still defects. In most cases, the schemes had been properly observed, but in some districts they had been administered, 'without energy and intelligence' or had been 'misunderstood'.⁵⁰ Localisation was criticised for failing to fully account for local peculiarities in language, population density and attitudes to the army. The report advocated greater central supervision.⁵¹ Methods such as the bringer's fee and newspaper advertising, both of which had been discontinued since 1888, were identified as valuable additions, if properly supervised.⁵² Regional tailoring to the regimental recruiting district, of which newspaper advertising was a part, was heavily endorsed in the committee's report.

⁵⁰ TNA: WO 32/6294: Wantage, *Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)*, pp.9-10.

⁵¹ TNA: WO 32/6294: R. Wantage, Baron, 'Conditions of Service (Other Ranks): General (Code 72(A)): Appendices to the Report of the Wantage Committee on Terms and Conditions of Service in the Army 1891 – 1892', in Wantage, *Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)*, pp.31-32.

⁵² TNA: WO 32/6294: Wantage, 'Appendices to the Report of the Wantage Committee', p.31.

The report recommended an enhanced military presence in the regimental districts, to be achieved in part through frequent marching or camping out of barracks. It reiterated that the best NCOs should be employed on occasion for recruiting or as instructors for the Militia and Volunteers. The committee's reasoning echoed that of the War Office in the early 1880s. The report advocated the continuing professionalisation of soldiering to encourage a respectable and dedicated soldier to develop. To that end the value of advertising was reiterated and the accuracy of the information imparted emphasised, particularly in the case of the recruiting literature still held by the GPO.⁵³ Despite the efforts of 1880-2, the recruiting system was still found wanting in the quality of its message. The committee agreed that, 'the advantages of the army could not be too well known and...the expense would yield results.'⁵⁴

One of the biggest criticisms the Wantage Committee levelled against the recruiting system was in the standard of recruits it provided, in particular the increase in men not meeting the specifications of 5 feet 4 inches in height, a 33 inch chest and 115 pounds in weight. In 1890, the committee reported, 25%, were classed as 'special enlistment'. In 1891 this figure had risen to 36%, or 12,975 out of 36,000 recruits.⁵⁵ Though in acceptance that the army had to accept the calibre with which it was presented, the committee bemoaned the increase in special enlistments when the army was still under establishment.

The Wantage Committee's investigations included the status of NCOs. As with the private soldier, comfort was identified as a key factor in raising the status of the

⁵³ TNA: WO 32/6294: Wantage, *Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)*, p.16.

⁵⁴ TNA: WO 32/6294: Wantage, 'Appendices to the Report of the Wantage Committee', p.31.

⁵⁵ TNA: WO 32/6294: Wantage, *Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)*, p.10.

corporal and sergeant ranks, and in improving the appeal of the military career.⁵⁶ Though satisfied overall with the NCO class, the presence of youth presented one cause for concern. Attributed partially to short service passing potential candidates into the reserves early, the slow increase in pay and rapid rise in mess bills combined with separation from friends not simultaneously progressing were also identified as impacting on the age and experience of the NCO.⁵⁷

Moreover, the predominance of 'young lads' presenting to enlist caused anxiety and confirmed for the committee that the level of pay offered by the army was still too low. Those capable of earning a man's wages did not show but immature lads not yet able to command more than a boy's wage were attracted.⁵⁸ Unusually for the British Army, the Wantage report advocated increased expenditure, particularly in relation to rank-and-file, noting that the army did not offer competitive terms of employment.⁵⁹ While the daily wage of 1s per day remained static, the committee endorsed the abolition of all compulsory stoppages except through negligence and misconduct.

Existing deductions and a general lack of personal control over wages had been identified as major grievances among the ranks and their removal were deemed provident as it both removed a source of bitterness and contention and raised the net pay of the soldier. The report recommended introducing greater flexibility with regards the soldier's ability to supplement his rations but also emphasised the long-term value in

⁵⁶ TNA: WO 32/6294: Wantage, *Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)*, pp.19-20.

⁵⁷ TNA: WO 32/6294: Wantage, *Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)*, p.20.

⁵⁸ TNA: WO 32/6294: Wantage, *Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)*, p.10-11.

⁵⁹ TNA: WO 32/6294: Wantage, *Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)*, p.13.

rendering services such as barrack maintenance, and medical care gratis in raising the status of the profession.⁶⁰

The nature and experience of the soldier was seemingly at the forefront of the committee's thoughts. To an even greater extent than the reforms, the focus of Wantage's report went beyond the superficial and outwardly marketable aspect of military service. Initial training and the role of physical and educational development in enhancing or impeding the soldier's ability to integrate into military life were explored.⁶¹ It signals a softening in the treatment of the soldier and the manner by which individual troops were developed as the tolerability of service was considered of increasing importance.

Reflected more generally is a gradual review of the army's ideal for the soldier. The committee dismissed as a delusion the traditional model of the soldier as an agricultural worker. Farm labourers, it stated, 'are old and weakly men tied by various circumstances to their native villages and shut out of competition'. By comparison the soldier is a 'young man of good physique who is free to offer his service whenever wages are not remunerative'.⁶² On that basis, the committee concluded, an improvement in recruiting methods would not be adequate to raise sufficient men.

As well as an inwardly directed focus on the army's treatment of its soldiers, the Wantage report also evidences a growing impatience in the military with expressions of

⁶⁰ TNA: WO 32/6294: Wantage, 'Appendices to the Report of the Wantage Committee', pp.33-34.

⁶¹ TNA: WO 32/6294: Wantage, 'Appendices to the Report of the Wantage Committee', p.32.

⁶² TNA: WO 32/6294: Wantage, 'Appendices to the Report of the Wantage Committee', p.33.

civilian prejudice against uniformed men. It demonstrates, perhaps for the first time in an official setting, a desire to see measures taken to pursue some form of reprimand against public discrimination in support of the soldier:

The committee can only hope that such a narrow minded prejudice will gradually disappear with the growth of a better knowledge of the army, but in the meantime, they desire to express their opinion that the War Office, as the guardian of the rights and position of the soldiers of the British Army, should take steps to test the legality of such refusals, [and] to oppose the licences of such houses of public entertainment or amusement as refuse general admittance to soldiers who are willing to pay for the accommodation required.⁶³

The committee found that such attitudes existed not only in the rural counties of the United Kingdom but also in urban centres such as London. It noted the adverse effect public prejudice had on recruiting. Also, as the above statement indicates, for the army as an institution the problem was becoming personal. The committee recognised that to gauge public prejudice would be difficult but claimed ‘The refusal to admit NCOs and soldiers in uniform to certain parts of theatres, or to the coffee rooms of hotels, may be taken as sufficient evidence of the feeling with which the manager believes his customers would regard the presence of a soldier’.⁶⁴ It is notable that the report’s recommendations were followed in this case, as Chapter 5’s examination of the discussion of public prejudice in the press will highlight.

The Wantage Committee concluded its report by advocating greater spending on the part of the War Office and the nation on the army, encouraging greater investment, financial and in its personnel, which had been so stubbornly avoided by military reformers and the Government for so long. Crucially for the soldier, it reiterated the notion that the pay of the ordinary ranks and NCOs should be increased through the

⁶³ TNA: WO 32/6294: Wantage, *Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)*, p.8.

⁶⁴ TNA: WO 32/6294: Wantage, *Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)*, p.8.

abolition of deductions and stoppages. Combined with greater flexibility in the periods of service to which they were committed, it was hoped their recommendations would remove much of the discontentment among the other ranks and prejudice against the soldiering profession.⁶⁵

THE WANTAGE REPORT: OPINION IS DIVIDED.

The probability of the Wantage report receiving universal support was low; it was immediately apparent by the level of dissent from several members of the committee itself that the opinions were divided. There was minor opposition from members of the committee itself, led by General Bulwer, against the advocated disbanding of deferred pay.⁶⁶ Rather more serious resistance to the Wantage report came from a civilian member of the committee, the assistant under-secretary and representative for the War Office Sir Arthur Haliburton. A long-term supporter of the Cardwell Reforms and the short-service system, Haliburton denounced the findings of the Wantage Committee on a number of issues including the concerns over the youth of modern recruits. He questioned whether young men enlisting was in fact recent development and doubted that improved pay for soldiers would aid recruitment, arguing that there was little connection between a recruit's motivation to enlist and the pay. Therefore, the large expenditure advocated by the report would be of little use.⁶⁷

Haliburton's approach to the terms and conditions in the army was pragmatic in comparison to the Wantage Committee. His dissent was a staunch defence of Cardwell,

⁶⁵ TNA: WO 32/6294: Wantage, *Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)*, p.27.

⁶⁶ TNA: WO 32/6294: E. G. Bulwer, General, 'Addendum to Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)' in Wantage, *Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)*, pp.1-2.

⁶⁷ TNA: WO 32/6294: A. Haliburton, 'Dissent against Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)' in Wantage, *Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)*, p.8.

favouring to return the army organisation to the pattern originally devised by the reforms of the 1870s and opposing moves to invest greater money into the soldiers' pay and living conditions. Referencing Lord Hartington's 1866 adjustment, he highlighted that the increase of 2d to the daily wage cost an extra £200,000 per annum, without increasing the intake. Moreover, Haliburton maintained, the soldier of 1891 earned triple what his 1866 predecessor had earned, from a net income of 3s ½d a day in 1866 to 9s ½d in 1891, when lower stoppages and increased deferred pay were taken into account.⁶⁸ Though supporting proposals to abolish 'extra messing' stoppages, the War Office representative opposed any further improvement to the soldier's package:

In doing this, some advantage may be given to the soldier, for it may be considered an axiom that his emoluments must never be touched except to be improved. When the time arrives, much less extensive and disturbing changes than those proposed by the Committee, will suffice to settle this question.⁶⁹

Haliburton's report reflects the tensions which continued to colour the reform debate which centred on competition between advocates of investment in renewed reform and supporters of retrenchment and of the Cardwellian system. He dismissed Wantage's recommendations as symptomatic of the feeling against Cardwell. 'This feeling has extended beyond the army', he stated, 'and a reaction has arisen in the public mind against a system which was worked out after exhaustive consideration and discussion, and which at one time inspired public confidence.'⁷⁰ Indeed, the Wantage report and the issues it covered gave rise to wide-scale debate within the War Office and Horse Guards. Notably, Lord Roberts, having noted his regret that he was unable to contribute to the committee's investigations, wrote his own piece on the issue of the social status

⁶⁸ TNA: WO 32/6294: Haliburton, 'Dissent against Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)', p.10.

⁶⁹ TNA: WO 32/6294: Haliburton, 'Dissent against Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)', p.10.

⁷⁰ TNA: WO 32/6294: Haliburton, 'Dissent against Conditions of Service (Other Ranks)', p.22.

of the soldier and its impact on the army's ability to recruit. 'National Prosperity and its effect on the army', written in 1891 whilst Lord Wantage's research was being undertaken, constituted a revision to an article Roberts had written in 1883 entitled 'Free Trade in the Army'.⁷¹ In 'Free Trade' Roberts had asserted that the poor terms and conditions of service had precipitated the poor status of the soldier and the army noting, 'If we are to have a voluntary army, we must have a contented one'.⁷² Almost a decade later Roberts broadened the issue further attributing the persistence in the low social position of the soldier to national prosperity. The corresponding rise in national wages and the quality of education for the lower classes diminished the recruiting pool and lowered the traditional appeal of the soldiering career.⁷³

Whilst identifying economic prosperity and the accompanying rise in social living standards and aspirations, Roberts raised various issues which had hindered progress or, if addressed, would improve the status of the soldier. The localisation and short-service schemes came under particular criticism. The simpler continental model was insufficient for the British Army's needs it was argued and that Cardwell's designs were therefore insufficient to improve recruiting. Roberts also indicted the schemes of damaging regimental ties, lowering the standard of recruits and failing to popularise the soldier. He identified a continuing lack of understanding among the British working classes of the change in conditions in the army and the educational opportunities and

⁷¹ TNA: WO 33/52: F. Roberts, Lieutenant-General Sir, 'Free Trade in the Army' (1883) in *Four Papers Recently Prepared or Referred to by General Lord Roberts with Reference to the subjects connected with the Report on the Terms and Conditions of Service in the Army* (The War Office, London: Harrison and Sons, Printers in ordinary to Her Majesty, 1892).

⁷² Roberts, 'Free Trade in the Army', p.4.

⁷³ TNA: WO 33/52: F. Roberts, Lieutenant-General Sir, 'National Prosperity and its Effect on the Army' (1891) in *Four Papers Recently Prepared or Referred to by General Lord Roberts with Reference to the subjects connected with the Report on the Terms and Conditions of Service in the Army* (The War Office, London: Harrison and Sons, Printers in ordinary to Her Majesty, 1892), p.15.

standard of life which could be enjoyed. He reiterated his 1883 desire for 'free trade' with conditions advantageous to both the State and the soldier.⁷⁴

Roberts's stance in 'National Prosperity' was remarkably close to that of the Wantage Report, only with the single-minded and direct approach of a single author. Many schemes had been espoused in 'Free Trade' in 1883, such as a three year domestic short service or a twelve year foreign long-service period intended to give soldiers greater choice in their service. Along with 'positive' branding or tattooing all soldiers with a symbol of military pride, Roberts sought to imbue a sense of individual investment in the soldiers' career. Although specific recommendations differed, the tone of Roberts's essay complimented that of Wantage confirming to an extent, the accuracy and validity of the latter's assertions and highlighting a broad concurrence across the War Office to the problems and remedies.

Opposition to the methods by which the army's difficulties should be attended certainly existed, as Haliburton's dissenting report demonstrates. The opinions of those in Haliburton's camp are easy to define, shaped as they were primarily by an adherence to the canon of Cardwell and by an adherence to economy. For the soldier however, the aim remained a constant: to achieve a level of popularisation and social rehabilitation to encourage his acceptance as a valid member of British society and a respectable worker. Roberts when on a panel reviewing the evidence submitted to the Wantage Committee noted with pleasure that he was, 'glad to observe', that hardly any of his proposals from 'National Prosperity and its Effect on the Army' had failed to secure support from one

⁷⁴ Roberts, 'National Prosperity and its effect on the Army', pp.15-16.

or more of the ‘high officials’ of the British Army, though none had expressed ‘entire concurrence’ with his views.⁷⁵

CONCLUSION

The War Office’s perception of the soldier was, for the most part, coloured by a desire for progress. The professionalisation of the recruiting service and the legitimising of the military career conform to contemporary social trends; in *Rise of Professional Society* (1989) Harold Perkin has noted, ‘Any group seeking to improve its position in the societal market for people will present a conscious image of its ideal self and the ideal society to which it aspires’.⁷⁶ To this the War Office conformed precisely. The aim of the War Office was to fundamentally alter the nature of the soldier, his calibre and outlook. In order to achieve this, the negative perceptions of the soldier held by the recruit-giving working classes in particular, needed to be addressed. It was believed that the popularisation of the soldier was achievable if the public could be made to see the benefits of military service.

This chapter, and Section I as a whole, present the War Office perspective through its reform of the terms and conditions of service and the nature of the soldier. When examined in the context of the string of Royal Commissions headed by Taylor, Armstrong, Airey and Wantage, it becomes clear that there was a clear sense of how the reformation of the British ordinary soldier was to be achieved. To move the public away from the idea of the army as an institution populated by the lowest members of society

⁷⁵ TNA: WO 33/52: F. Roberts, Lieutenant-General Sir, ‘A Review of the Evidence given before Lord Wantage’s Committee, 1 September 1891’, in *Four Papers Recently Prepared or Referred to by General Lord Roberts with Reference to the subjects connected with the Report on the Terms and Conditions of Service in the Army* (The War Office, London: Harrison and Sons, Printers in ordinary to Her Majesty, 1892), p.29.

⁷⁶ H. Perkin, *Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880*, (London: Routledge, 1989), p.361.

for whom there was nowhere else to go, the War Office needed to redefine what being a soldier meant.

It was hoped that the working classes of Britain could be convinced of the merits of soldiering as a career and learn to perceive service in army as a valuable contract of employment entered into through honest transaction between the soldier and the State. What the War Office wanted from its soldiers were men of professionalism and motivation. The short-service soldier was envisaged to be young, enthused by a taste for army life. The older soldiers would have the experience and steadfastness required to be good NCOs and would be motivated by increased comfort and prestige. More broadly, the War Office wanted the army, through the localised regiments to be part of British national and local life. These major reforms were supplemented by lesser modifications and improvements to living standards, discipline and prospects enjoyed by NCOs.

The War Office was only partially successful in achieving their aims, as the necessity of the Wantage Commission twenty years following the introduction of Cardwell's initial schemes confirms. In failing to raise the pay of the soldier, the army never competed as easily as it would have liked in the market for labour. Moreover, the social status of service in the ranks was not sufficiently raised. Low remuneration continued to indicate low worth and attract individuals for whom the 1s a day wage was an improvement.

The systems Cardwell and Childers introduced were important for the British Army however. The recruiting systems they established would serve the army well into the twentieth century. They did succeed in raising recruiting, even if that increase was off-

set by the youth and brevity of service which dogged the short-service system intake. The perpetual low salary combined with the remarkable pressures placed on the army by the demands of the Empire checked the positive impact of the Cardwell-Childers Reforms. They may not have achieved a direct influence in altering public perceptions of the soldier, however, indirectly, they encouraged greater engagement with the soldier in public discourse. Discussion over the state of the rank-and-file, particularly in light of the youth of the short-service soldier would help to shift public perceptions of the military to centre on the soldier rather than on the army as an institution, as Section II will demonstrate.

**SECTION II:
THE PUBLIC PERSPECTIVE**

CHAPTER FOUR

THE REFORMS, THE SOLDIER AND THE PRESS

INTRODUCTION

The War Office reforms explored in Section I sought to address the twin recruiting difficulties of quality and quantity. They arose, in part, from the traditionally low social status of the army and the soldier. The nature of their reception within the realms of the public sphere lies at the heart of the process to identify their impact. Central to this enquiry are the attitudes of the public: how did the public engage with the military following the reforms; how did attitudes change as a result of the reforms and to what extent; and what other influences were present besides the initiatives of the War Office? An examination of the presence of the British Army and of the British soldier in the press of the late-nineteenth century presents an illuminating insight into the social and political context of socio-military integration during the period.

The reasoning behind the public, and specifically working-class, aversion to enlistment was rooted in a combination of preconception and prejudice. Whilst the mistrust with which the British people traditionally viewed standing armies accounted for a considerable proportion of their hostility, there was also a more grounded social distaste for the soldier and army life. As the military memoirs of Chapter 8 and 9 suggest, in the civilian idea of the soldier he featured as a morally and spiritually low order of being with preconceptions of military life involving a bleak existence of servitude, drudgery and remoteness. The civilian expectation of life in the military was one which offered less for a man's social and financial wellbeing than that which was available for the lowest unskilled labourer.

This chapter will analyse something of the nature of the engagement by the burgeoning press industry with the military in order to present a perspective of the social integration of the British Army from the side of the public. This will be pursued from two angles. The first, explored in Chapter 4 examines the reception and response to the War Office Reforms themselves, identifying the course and direction of the public debate over the necessity and objective of military change. This follows directly from ‘The War Office Perception’, presenting some context for the schemes which originated from that department and whose formulation is examined in the opening section of this thesis. Chapter 5 will examine the second angle, considering the public’s relationship with the soldier and the presence of the soldier as an individual and as a collective, as presented by the press.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRITISH PRESS

The daily and weekly newspaper and topical periodicals such as *Reynolds’s Weekly Newspaper* form the chief source material examined in this chapter. These publications fall into two categories, ‘locally based’ and ‘London based’. Up until the 1890s there was no identifiable ‘national press’. With the exception of *The Times*, local and London based publications served as the primary source of news and reports. Articles from the London newspapers and information from the central news agencies were shared and correspondents for larger newspapers were stationed in hotspots such as the Houses of Parliament. Furthermore, the focus of local newspapers, as Aled Jones has identified, was rather more eclectic than in modern incarnations; ‘many local newspapers were as preoccupied with national and international news as were the London-based national

papers...Often the one [national/international affairs] was a key to the proper understanding of the other [local affairs].'¹

The London and local press have received specific focus in this thesis for these reasons and also because the architects of the War Office reforms themselves identified the local press as the target for their schemes when seeking to promote public awareness of the army through press advertising. The London papers such as *The Standard*, *The Pall Mall Gazette* and *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* presented an up-to-date summary of the political developments affecting the military as well as detailed analytical pieces and coverage of local London issues. The few national publications, such as *The Times*, enjoyed regular repetition in the London publications offering further indication as to the importance of, or interest in, certain stories, as well as the shelf-life and extent to which individual topics had widespread relevance. Further to this, the local newspapers, which also reprinted frequently from the London publications, the likes of which by 1900 had 'virtually become the national press', offer some indication as to the extent to which the town and the rural population of the United Kingdom were permeated by policy directed from central government.² They also add a degree of local interest and illustrate the nature of local concerns, ground level relations with the military and the soldier and the information attainable by the population at large.

The satirical cartoon is another important source utilised in the course of chapters 4 and 5. There was a variety of illustrated periodicals and newspapers available to the British public during the latter-nineteenth century. *Punch*, established in 1842, set the standard

¹ Jones, 'Local Journalism in Victorian Popular Culture', pp.63-64.

² J. O. Baylen, 'The British Press, 1861 – 1918', in *The Encyclopaedia of the British Press 1422 – 1922*, ed. by D. Griffiths (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1993), p.34.

for the genre.³ Under its co-founder and editor Mark Lemon, *Punch* quickly identified a broad and profitable readership by appealing to a middle-ground of political opinion and building a considerable reputation for, ‘sophisticated humour and an avoidance of crudity and scandal’.⁴ By the late 1840s, the publication boasted an annual circulation of 37,500 copies.⁵

The success of *Punch* encouraged a number of imitators, the most successful of which were *Fun*, a Liberal publication launched in September 1861 and the Conservative-inclined paper *Judy*, which appeared from 1867. With weekly sales of 20,000 copies by 1865, *Fun* enjoyed considerable influence but never surpassed *Punch* in popularity.⁶ Along with *Judy* however, *Fun*, ‘subdivided and expanded the market’ by drawing on a ‘slightly racier humour’ and by undercutting its rival considerably.⁷ They employed younger writers and illustrators and, in the case of *Fun* in particular, appealed to a young metropolitan readership with an interest in social satire and the Arts.

Cartoons and the illustrated press had, by the middle of the nineteenth century, entered a popular culture which crossed political, social and class divides to enjoy consumption by a large and diverse ‘mass’ readership.⁸ This was extended further by the launch of *Funny Folks* in December 1874. Heavily illustrated and drawing on pictorial jokes and stories in favour of prose, *Funny Folks* is considered to be Britain’s first ‘comic’.⁹ It

³ For a full study of *Punch* in the nineteenth-century see R. G. G. Price, *A History of Punch* (London: Collins, 1957).

⁴ N. Hiley, ‘Comic Periodicals’, *19th Century UK Periodicals* (Detroit: Gale, 2008), [http://find.galegroup.com/ukpc/NCUK_researchguide.htm, accessed 12 November 2015].

⁵ J. Carlisle, *Picturing Reform in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.12.

⁶ Hiley, ‘Comic Periodicals’.

⁷ Hiley, ‘Comic Periodicals’.

⁸ P. Anderson, *Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture 1790 – 1860* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p.158.

⁹ Hiley, ‘Comic Periodicals’.

was later joined by *Illustrated Chips* and the *Penny Illustrated Paper* and appealed to a broad and predominantly lower-middle and working-class readership.

Cartoons present an important insight into Victorian visual culture. The cartoonist's illustration serves primarily as a visual representation of a particular topic. However, the image, often coupled with a caption or poem, may address several subtle and interconnected issues simultaneously conveying the tone of a topic with a succinct skill not possible in prose alone. As Carlisle terms it, the illustrated press 'invited readers to think with their eyes'.¹⁰ They can therefore offer a valuable political and cultural interpretation of the military's social integration during this period. It is notable however, that no one particular publication or cartoonist took a specific interest in the soldier or military affairs. The examples examined in this research derive from half-a-dozen periodicals and were produced by a variety of illustrators from the likes of Tenniel, Proctor and Yeats, to more obscure or even anonymous cartoonists.¹¹

The Victorian press as a whole was strongly politicised. Politics had a direct impact during the press industry's formative years as politicians recognised the power inherent therein. High profile politicians such as Gladstone sought to use the press to promote their political agendas. The Liberals dominated political press influence well into the 1880s. Their predominance is evident in the number of publications which identified as Liberal rather than Conservative. Liberal dailies in London included the early *Daily*

¹⁰ Carlisle, *Picturing Reform*, p.2.

¹¹ Hiller notes in her discussion of the 'enigma' of the Victorian periodical that anonymity was commonly employed by journalists and illustrators working in the British press in the nineteenth century. The practice existed in part as a tradition deriving from the early-modern period when it provided safety from the authorities. Similarly, the Victorians felt anonymity allowed for greater honesty and protection for the author/artist to criticise friends and social superiors without fear of repercussion. See M. R. Hiller, 'The Identification of Authors: The Great Victorian Enigma', in *Victorian Periodicals: A Guide to Research*, ed. by J. Don Vann and R. T. Van Ardel (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1978), pp.123-4.

Telegraph, the *Daily News*, *Daily Chronical*, *Echo* and the *Morning Advertiser*.¹² The conservative camp in London included only *The Standard*, *The Times*, *Morning Post* and *Globe*. In the localities also, the Liberal Press enjoyed the lion's share of sympathetic newspapers; the majority of major publications were liberal including the *Northern Daily Express* and the *Northern Echo*, the *Leeds Mercury*, the *Manchester Evening News* and the *Manchester Guardian* as well as the majority of papers in Liverpool, the *Birmingham Daily Post*, and the *Northampton Mercury*.¹³

This domination was partly due to the Liberals having identified the value and power of the press from an early stage. It was not until the 1880s, argues Baylen, that the Tories fully realised its potential. This was reflected in the development of news agencies, with the Central Press Agency established in 1863 as a Liberal institution. The Press Association (1868) was also liberal, even though it was supposed to be non-partisan. The Central Press Agency was bought by the Tories in 1870 in an attempt to wrestle some influence back from the Liberals but despite their gradual awakening, the political undercurrent was drifting away from the British press as rapidly as it had taken hold. As Alan Lee has noted, by the 1880s commercialisation of the newspaper industry and the acquisition of the majority of publications by a small number of owners increased general proprietorial control and lessened political influence and direction. By 1900 only the *Manchester Guardian* was a strong contender for the Liberal Press as 2/3 morning newspapers and 4/5 evening papers were owned by only four proprietors.¹⁴

¹² The *Pall Mall Gazette* also started life in a Liberal guise but due to internal divisions over issues such as home rule, imperialism and the Liberal Party's approaches to social and economic reform, became more right wing during the 1880s and 1890s.

¹³ J. O. Baylen, 'The British Press, 1861 – 1918', p.39.

¹⁴ J. O. Baylen, 'The British Press, 1861 – 1918', p.40.

THE BRITISH ARMY, THE SOLDIER AND THE PRESS

The British Army, and the soldier specifically, maintained a regular and consistent presence in the late-nineteenth-century press and constituted a familiar, though not dominant, feature in the pages of both the London and local newspapers. Throughout this period this coverage demonstrably evolved and expanded both in terms of the volume of material published but, more importantly, in its content and focus. Such changes developed as a gradual shift in balance from articles concerning administrative and routine issues of army organisation and discipline to pieces concerned with the employment and the welfare of British troops. What the British press's coverage of military affairs demonstrates, when examined over this thirty year period, is a marked transition in attitudes towards Tommy Atkins and issues surrounding the soldier.

The trajectory of this shift extended from an emphasis in the late 1860s on a public and political ethos regarding the military as a tool, functional and subject primarily to economic and strategic concerns. The soldier was rarely referenced or addressed in his own right and public engagement with the military existed at an institutional level only. Engagement with the affairs of British Army was detailed and consistent, with information regarding the whereabouts and strength of the army readily available. There was, however, limited acknowledgement offered in respect of the men who actually populated its ranks. In the 1870s in particular, the primary presence of the soldier as an individual in the regional and London press came in the form of crime. It is, perhaps, an enduring characteristic of the press that of the subject matter worthy of 'news', crime is at the forefront. It is not surprising, therefore, that the soldier of the latter 1860s and 1870s enjoyed as his most common cause to appear in the newspaper, violent crime.

This was not to suggest that crime was greater in the army than in civilian life. Rather, the spotlight of the press fell on the soldier as an *individual* most frequently when the subject matter was such. Whilst the army featured in the press in a multitude of capacities and the nation's military capabilities were debated on a variety of fronts, the soldier as an individual had a far more restricted presence in the 1860s and 1870s. A series of such articles in 1869 saw the word 'soldier' frequently appear in tandem with the word 'murder'. Shootings at Aldershot, Dover and Devonport precipitated a run of articles reporting on the crimes and announcing the sentencing and punishment (in a civilian court) of the perpetrators.¹⁵ The military memoirs examined in chapters 8 and 9 make reference to the ready association the civilian made between the army and crime and a brief examination of the newspapers illustrates that the most frequent and undoubtedly the most sensational reference made to the soldier was in that context.

Undoubtedly, news of the reforms of the 1870s and 1880s dominated public debate around the army. The tendency of the public to perceive the military in impersonal and possessive terms encouraged little consideration to be directed towards the soldiers themselves. Chapter 5 identifies the concerns and influences which encouraged a transition away from this initial type of engagement and over the course of twenty years saw a new perspective emerge, one imbued with far greater levels of cultural empathy and national obligation. This perspective on the social engagement with the army and the soldier does not constitute the complete picture, but rather highlights the level of engagement the public and the military established. The paradox of Tommy Atkins, specifically the apathy traditionally demonstrated by the public towards the army and

¹⁵ For example see: 'A Soldier Attacked by his Own Sword', in *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* (7 June 1869), issue 4961; 'Another Attempted Murder by a Soldier' in *The Bradford Observer* (18 August 1869), issue 2077; 'Brutal Assault by Soldiers at Brecon', in *Western Mail* (17 August 1869), issue 93; 'Execution of a Soldier at Winchester', in *Reynolds's Newspaper* (12 September 1869), issue 996; 'Execution of the Soldier William Taylor for the Murder of Corporal Skullen, in *The Dundee Courier and Argus* (12 October 1869), issue 5053.

his popularity in other areas of popular and imperialist culture, and the movements to achieve greater integration may be better understood in this context. It was private, not public concern which sought to address the hardship and ostracised position of the soldier, therefore, despite the efforts of the Cardwell-Childers Reforms, the British civilian did not engage with the British soldier beyond a localised, sporadic and superficial state.

Despite such inconsistencies, which become apparent through the press, the shift in public attitudes remains tangible. The soldier of the 1890s occupied a position front and centre of the public perception of the army with his employment and welfare constituting a considerable and increasing weight of the coverage of military affairs. This coverage highlights a transition in public perception. There is an increasing willingness to perceive the army as an institution composed of men, and even ‘fellow Englishmen’. Whereas the 1870s and 1880s indicate limited awareness of the soldier specifically, the 1890s reveal a decided shift in terms of what the British Army meant and where the nation stood in relation to the welfare of its personnel. Old soldiers and pensioners received particular interest as did the scrutiny of acts of prejudice against uniformed men. Increasingly there becomes apparent a sense of national debt and responsibility with regards to the soldier as the perception of the British Army shifts to encompass this human element, beyond the possessive and pragmatic attitudes of the 1860s and 1870s.

THE MILITARY, POLITICS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

The Victorian newspaper consumer could be more intimately acquainted with his army than his counterpart in the twenty-first century. London and local publications endowed

their readership with regular summaries of the basics of army organisation. Monthly updates, approximately named ‘Stations of the British Army’, informed readers of the location of the army for that coming month. Publications such as the *Liverpool Mercury*, and *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* provided a concise but comprehensive list of the stations under British Army control, both within Britain itself and across the Empire, complete with the regiment or battalion currently residing therein, or due to arrive within the coming month.¹⁶ Indeed, interested civilians could, if they so desired, trace the movements of a particular regiment or battalion around the empire as well as remaining abreast of the distribution of the nation’s military around the country and the globe.

The Victorian press also acquainted the public with the specifics of army organisation and in particular its financial status and manpower strength. Such details were most comprehensively published annually following the release of the ‘Army Estimates’ by the War Office. The content varied depending on the newspaper and the stage at which the estimates were announced. In 1869 for instance, *Reynolds’s Newspaper* delivered an early summary for its readers. Focusing on manpower and expenditure, it announced a maximum expenditure of £10,834,000 with a reductions amounting to 10% of the net cost of military services. *Reynolds’s* also summarised the new strength of the army, announcing a total of 127,336 men whilst highlighting the reduction in manpower of 11,121 men, sourced from both the colonies and at home, the latter amounting to 40 men per garrison. Also highlighted were branch specific changes, such as that the Infantry in particular would lose 150 officers and 204 NCOs.¹⁷ There was limited

¹⁶ For example see: *The Preston Guardian* (3 April 1869), Issue 3014; (13 September 1879), Issue 3472; (12 January 1884), Issue 3704; or *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, London (9 July 1871), Issue 1494; (1 July 1877), Issue 1806; (4 December 1881), Issue 2037; (3 January 1886), Issue 2250; (25 June 1893), Issue 2640; (26 March 1899), Issue 2940.

¹⁷ ‘The Army Estimates’ in *Reynolds’s Newspaper* (7 March 1869), Issue 969.

commentary accompanying the basic articles on the Army Estimates; the majority of related entries provided the figures in prose form with comparisons on the previous year or decade the extent of the analysis.

The *Pall Mall Gazette*, in an article printed four days after *Reynolds's* entry, presented its summary with greater emphasis on the 'votes' taken by parliament on the various components of the army organisation under review. Particular emphasis was placed by the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the administrative aspects of the army and costings relating to stores and provisions, noting £32,000 to be spent on new sites for military stores.¹⁸ The *Hampshire Telegraph* offered more specific information listing the costings for the multifarious services necessary for the organisation of the army such as the General Staff pay, commissariat establishments and the movement of troops, clothing, barrack establishments, divine services, the administration of martial law and hospitals.¹⁹

The presence of such differing levels of detail in the localised press presents some indication as to the relevance of the military to local populations. In the case of the *Hampshire Telegraph* there is a clear local interest which encouraged a greater level of scrutiny of the finer details of the military accounts. The main article, 'The Army Estimates' was followed by a further piece, 'Local Details', which outlined the investment and condition of the military and coastal installations of areas such as Portsmouth.²⁰ Projects such as the reconstruction of the Haslar sea wall and protection for Southsea Beach may have involved local construction companies and a local work force and other developments such as the proposed Hospital for Soldiers' Wives had the

¹⁸ 'The Army Estimates', in *Pall Mall Gazette* (11 March 1869), issue 1273.

¹⁹ 'The Army Estimates', in *The Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronical* (13 March 1869), issue 3816.

²⁰ 'Local Details', in *The Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronical* (13 March 1869), issue 3816.

potential to offer additional employment. The investment allocated to establishments and developments, particularly those with potentially joint civilian and military implications, would have had a direct relevance to local populaces.

The nature of the annual reviews varied little over the forthcoming decades, with each War Office estimate being reprinted and reviewed for the benefit of the public in the press. In the 1890s, for example, the *Birmingham Daily Post* presented reports outlining the army's financial and operational stance for its readers in a manner similar to those available in the late 1860s. The level of detail and the consistency with which the Army Estimates appeared in the press between 1869 and 1899 highlights the level of access ordinary members of the public were afforded to the status of the military organisation. It also indicates a high level of perceived public ownership. The press reports on the Army Estimates, and indeed the release of such information by the War Office, are presented almost as an invoice and account statement for the tax payer. Frequently, articles relating to the military were headed by, or made reference to 'our army' and addressed corresponding issues as a matter of interest for the nation as proprietor. The *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, for example, led with the title 'Our Army' in its review of Cardwell's release of the 1870 Army Estimates.²¹

Members of the public, and indeed serving and ex-soldiers, writing letters to the editors of various papers echoed such terminology as they sought to discuss the state or position of 'our army' in relations to reductions or continental war. Anonymity generally obscures the identity of the letter-writers, but predominantly they were male, civilian, with an interest in military affairs or issues of national defence, or they were

²¹ 'Our Army' in *The Cornish Gazette, Falmouth Packet and General Advertiser* (5 March 1870), issue 3477.

soldiers. The *Morning Post* published three letters in the May of 1879 discussing the recent changes to army organisation under Cardwell which referred to the military repeatedly as ‘our army’.²²

This sense of the public as a proprietor of the British Army is significant in understanding the terms of the civilian’s relationship with the army and the soldier. The pragmatic and perfunctory manner with which the public viewed the British Army, which becomes clear in the focus and tone of the early newspaper coverage of military matters, demonstrates that, for the most part, the army was a possession and a tool. It was paid for by the tax payer, expected to perform the functions for which it was maintained and in some cases followed with interest more for the impact military decisions had on a local economy and labour. There the public’s obligations ended. It was not until the 1890s that the soldier would emerge to the fore of the civilian perception of the British Army.

THE CARDWELL REFORMS IN THE PRESS, 1868 - 1874

Newspaper engagement with the army went beyond presenting a surface-level knowledge of its yearly financial position and global whereabouts; just as the release of the Army Estimates encouraged an annual discussion, so did the less routine political developments, particularly those intended for military reform. When Cardwell released his Army Estimates in March 1869, a handful of newspapers published detailed articles assessing the appropriateness of the newly proposed reforms they contained. London’s *Pall Mall Gazette* took a particularly bleak view of the War Office’s plans, broadly

²² ‘Our Army’ in *The Morning Post*, London (22 May 1879), issue 33354; (23 May 1879), issue 33355; (26 May 1879), issue 55557.

dismissing the reductions in manpower as insufficient and conceding that reforms to recruiting would yield ‘moral consequences’ but doubting their effectiveness;

How far short they fall of anything like a comprehensive scheme of military reform – of what is now loudly demanded – need hardly be pointed out. With the exception of one feature of the withdrawal of the troops from the colonies, there is nothing in the present estimates which in any way sensibly alters or improves our military system.²³

The *Pall Mall Gazette*, a Conservative paper under the editorship of Frederick Greenwood until 1880, vociferously criticised Cardwell’s schemes but equally enthusiastically espoused military reform, announcing how the proposed short-service system was, ‘favourably received by the house’, but adding with a cautionary tone that it would be met with great disappointment, ‘should it prove impractical to introduce such a system’.²⁴ Partisan politics evidently played some part in the *Pall Mall Gazette*’s response to the reforms. As one of a minority of Conservative newspapers in the 1870s the *Pall Mall Gazette*’s Tory stance is conspicuous. The publication would be a regular commentator and frequent critic of the Liberal military reforms.

What is more striking than the *Pall Mall Gazette*’s enthusiasm for reform debate in 1869 is the broader indifference displayed by the press. Engagement with the reforms did not erupt in 1869, with the exception of the aforementioned newspaper, with the majority of newspapers reporting on the Army Estimates as per usual with little attention paid to the changes being announced. Newspapers which did engage at the early stages, such as the *Dundee Courier and Argus* were rather more dispassionate, repeating articles from *The Times* and the *Broad Arrow* but offering limited judgement

²³ ‘Cardwell on Army Reform’ in *Pall Mall Gazette* (12 March 1869), issue 1274.

²⁴ ‘Cardwell on Army Reform’ in *Pall Mall Gazette* (12 March 1869), issue 1274.

on their likely effectiveness.²⁵ Other publications took umbrage with specific aspects of the reforms. *The Standard*, for example, which at the time was considered conservative but not Conservative, attacked the Liberals for discharging soldiers for the purposes of economy claiming, ‘the professed regard of the Liberal Party for the working classes is strongly contrasted with their acts in the case of the poor discharged soldiers under Mr Cardwell’s “economy”’.²⁶ The story was repeated the following day in the *Hampshire Advertiser*.²⁷ In 1869, little notice was taken of Cardwell’s plans.

By Cardwell’s second round of Army Estimates in March 1870, interest had grown. Primarily, the reduction in numbers, withdrawal from the colonies and the short-service system were the key aspects upon which attention was focused. Several newspapers expressed relief and approbation. The *Northern Echo*, for instance, admitted apprehension when first examining the summaries of the reforms fearing that the thrust of Cardwell’s measures focused on a simple disbandment, especially of private soldiers and therefore might prove detrimental to the army’s efficiency. Instead, however, the article assuredly announced that their fears had been laid to rest by the confirmation, founded on ‘explicit details’, that the army’s efficiency would in fact be increased.²⁸ As an ‘old soldier’ stated in a letter to the Editor of *The Standard*, ‘all seem to agree that [our army is] at present thoroughly inefficient’.²⁹ Even the *Pall Mall Gazette* couldn’t help but applaud Cardwell’s abolition of recruiting bounties which, the article exclaimed, had ‘for so many years eaten into the heart of our military existence and

²⁵ ‘Rumoured Reductions in the Army’ in *The Dundee Courier and Argus* (28 December 1869), issue 4806.

²⁶ ‘The Soldiers Discharged for Economy’ in *The Standard*, London (17 August 1869), issue 14052.

²⁷ ‘The Soldiers Discharged for Economy’ in *The Hampshire Advertiser* (18 August 1869), issue 2419.

²⁸ ‘Army Reform’ in *The Northern Echo* (5 March 1870), issue 55.

²⁹ ‘Army Reorganisation. To the Editor of *The Standard*’ in *The Standard* (22 December 1870), issue 14474.

wrought more mischief than it is possible to calculate'.³⁰ Indeed, the awarding of bounties to men enlisting was one which the *Pall Mall Gazette* identified as particularly culpable for the poor quality of military recruits:

The bounty...gives us exactly the men whom we desire not to attract; it is chargeable with all the mischievous consequences, direct and indirect, which proceed from the presence of such men, with their miserable pounds, in the barrack rooms; it is one of the links which bind the service to the public-house; it is a direct encouragement and mainspring of desertion; it is very costly; it obliged us to maintain the system of branding; finally it interferes with our getting rid of bad characters when we discover them.³¹

Broadly speaking, the initial announcement of the War Office's schemes for reform were well received by newspapers across the political spectrum.

In spite of a general acceptance of the necessity of military reform, the early coverage of activities at the War Office was relatively light. There lingered a sense of routine as the new schemes and measures were announced alongside the annual Army Estimates. It took the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in the July of 1870 to intensify the debate. Awareness of the military systems favoured by France and Prussia became acutely focused and increasingly introspective as the press and the public queried the British Army's own position, strengths and weaknesses. As one nervous correspondent to the *Morning Post* professed:

Those who look on as spectators, taking no active part in the great struggle, can have little faith in any successful result in the patriotic efforts of a people, no matter how gallant and warlike, that is thus sorely pressed and sadly circumstanced; and we, above all others, knowing how utterly hopeless would be our own position in like case, would do well to take the lesson home, and insure ourselves without delay, as we may readily do, against the possibility of similar national disaster.³²

³⁰ 'Army Reforms' in *Pall Mall Gazette* (13 June 1870), issue 1663.

³¹ 'Army Reforms' in *Pall Mall Gazette* (3 June 1870), issue 1663.

³² 'Army Organisation' in *The Morning Post* (6 October 1870), issue 30211.

The issue of military reform took on greater significance in light of the continental hostilities unfolding. Public unease over military threats from abroad precipitated an increased urgency in calls for Cardwell's proposed reforms to ensure an increase in the efficiency and strength of the army, not simply to pander to the Liberal Party's desire for retrenchment.

Cardwell's schemes, even in light of the hostilities between France and Prussia, did not have universal support. Several publications proceeded over the course of 1870 to criticise Cardwell's schemes. A particularly vitriolic article appeared in the *Lancaster Gazette* denouncing Cardwell's 'meddling and muddling'. The piece focused on the changes being proposed to the local yeomanry but also expressed anger at the apparent continuation of old recruiting habits despite the War Office's assurances of change and in spite of the discharge of serving soldiers;

A recruiting party had been traversing the streets of Preston during the week with band, sergeants, ribbon etc., after the old plan. So after that, to make a show of economy, discharging thousands and thousands of trained soldiers, only yesterday as it were, our precious rulers find such a deficiency of men as to be obliged to resort to the old recruiting practice and to make that most humiliating confession of inadequate recruitment... here is "saving at the spigot and wasting at the bung-hole" with a vengeance.³³

The need for reform was seemingly not disputed, but the manner in which it was to be achieved was a source of tension. The prevalence of regional interest in several of the local publications further indicates a diminished level of interest in the reforms from a London perspective and at a national level. The impact of localisation and of the reforms to recruiting attracted greater interest in the localities than the continuing

³³ 'Army Reforms (?) - "Meddling and Muddling"', in *The Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmoreland and Yorkshire & co.* (18 June 1870), issue 4342.

efficiency of the British Army as a whole. This is in much the same vein as the additional scrutiny budgets and proposals for the construction and maintenance of local War Office properties contained within the annual Army Estimates had done.

Reflecting the impersonal relationship the public had with the army at this stage, discussion of the reforms referenced the soldier very little. The overall efficiency of the army remained the base line of concern and despite Cardwell's interest in encouraging a social reassessment of the soldier, it was slow to gain open acknowledgement. The first discussion of 'the soldier' came with the announcement of short service, through the Army Enlistment Bill, in August 1870. An army circular appeared in several newspapers including the *Manchester Guardian* in which the new systems of long and short service were outlined and the appeal of military life was espoused. 'There are few callings in civil life open to unskilled labour which promise to a steady and deserving young man such advantages as are offered to a good and meritorious soldier in Her Majesty's service', it concluded in a clear attempt to bolster the appeal of short service.³⁴

The *Pall Mall Gazette* weighed in on the subject, expressing 'satisfaction not unmixed with grateful surprise' at the successful passing of the bill, noting the delay caused by the Franco-Prussian conflict.³⁵ In a remarkably in-depth article the newspaper outlined the major lines of opposition levied against short service, including the compatibility with Indian service, the necessity of a Reserve and the loss of experienced soldiers. Firmly in favour of the scheme, the *Pall Mall Gazette* hoped that stimulation to

³⁴ 'Enlistment in the Army' in *Manchester Times* (20 August 1870), issue 664.

³⁵ 'The Army Enlistment Bill' in *Pall Mall Gazette* (1 August 1870), issue 1705.

recruiting and enlistment would be the primary gain, though acknowledging that it would take six years for the true impact to be identifiable.

The short-service system did not attract a great deal of attention when it was passed in August 1870. As the *Pall Mall Gazette* pointed out, the system would take at least six years to be fully introduced and whilst there was some speculation, there was limited sensationalism surrounding the introduction. The *Glasgow Herald* reported that England had responded well to Cardwell's plans and accepted with 'faith which does it credit' assurances that the army was never in a more efficient condition.³⁶ The tension created by the continental conflict saw an acceptance of the necessity for change but, short service notwithstanding, general disagreement over the best method for achieving it continued and grew as 1870 progressed into 1871. The *Liverpool Mercury* identified the continuing unease with which the British public continued to regard the threat of an invasion. Whilst denouncing such alarmist attitudes the article conceded that the situation in which Britain found herself was not acceptable and that measures were needed to make the defences of the nation reliable.³⁷

The press approached the question of army reform from a variety of angles, including a close focus on the politicians at its core. Several of Cardwell's speeches were reproduced, as were the various appearances made by the recent civil Lord of the Admiralty George Otto Trevelyan. A vocal supporter of military reform, Trevelyan added greater detail, colour and perspective to the growing public debate. As such the British public had access not only to the basic information delivered to them as part of

³⁶ 'Recruiting for the Army and the Enlistment Act of 1870' in *Glasgow Herald* (27 September 1870), issue 9590.

³⁷ 'National Defence and the Army' in *Liverpool Mercury* (18 February 1871), issue 7177.

the Army Estimates, but also to the analysis of the debate and responses by the War Office and its political supporters and opponents. Several newspapers, including the *Liverpool Mercury* printed concurrent articles presenting both sides of the debate.³⁸

Encouraged by the Franco-Prussian hostilities, the details of Cardwell's plans were becoming better known as 1871 progressed and the newspapers gleefully confirmed the facts as they became available. Particular relief was evident in the announcement that a voluntary means of enlistment was to be maintained with the improvement of inducements to boost recruitment.³⁹ The manner and the extent of the reforms remained the sticking point in the majority of their public coverage. Increasingly, past and serving soldiers and (primarily) officers, wrote to offer their opinions and suggestions, in some cases advocating the very schemes Cardwell was in the process of devising.

Despite the embargo on soldiers discussing military matters in public, anonymity through the use of vague references to their rank, such as 'an NCO' or referring to oneself as 'one who has served', or 'Ich Dien' (I serve), allowed the most determined commentators to submit their letters to the press. 'An Adjutant', writing to the *Standard* in February 1871, emphasised his feeling on strengthened county-regiment affiliation. He stated he felt sure that, 'a regiment recruited entirely in its own county will have more *esprit de corps* and get better men: a better class of men would come forward if they and their neighbours can serve together under the old colours under which their

³⁸ 'Mr Cardwell on Army Reform' in *The Bradford Observer* (3 January 1871), issue 2504; 'The Government and the Army' and 'Mr. G. O. Trevelyan's Visit to Liverpool' in *The Liverpool Mercury* (4 January 1871), issue 7160.

³⁹ 'Army Reform' in *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* (Dublin) (6 February 1871), issue N/A, and 'Mr Cardwell's Scheme of Army Reform' in *The Bradford Observer* (6 February 1871), issue 2533.

fathers have served before'.⁴⁰ Such assertions lay at the foundation of the War Office's philosophy of localisation. As the debate gathered pace and volume, the press began to exhibit both opponents and proponents of Cardwell's schemes, some from the latter, like 'The Adjutant', proffering suggestions which pre-empted Cardwell.

The Army Estimates of 1871 and the rapidly expanding debate on military and defence reform saw the two streams of military information diverging as the perceived reorganisation of the army took on increasing significance and moved beyond the realms of routine governmental budgeting. Articles which chose to explore the two issues together found Cardwell's schemes, at their 1871 point, rather uninspiring. As the *Derby Mercury* noted bitterly,

No radical change appears to be contemplated in the elements of our military system. All the lessons of the [Franco-Prussian] war have apparently only confirmed the government in the idea that our present military system is the one best suited to this country; and that the upmost of our reforms they propose is the simple increase in existing land forces without any material alteration in the mode by which they are raised.⁴¹

There was undoubtedly an impatience colouring the attitudes of the press when observing the revelation of the War Office's plans for reform in 1871. The combination of the concerted change with which the Liberal Party had already embarked and the violent events unfolding on the continent had awoken in the political and military commentators an awareness and with it an expectation that the limits of Britain's own military organisation would receive address.

⁴⁰ 'Army Reform' in *The Standard* (9 February 1871), issue 14516.

⁴¹ 'The Army Estimates' in *The Derby Mercury* (15 February 1871), issue 8177.

The Pall Mall Gazette published a series of lengthy and verbose articles on Cardwell's reforms throughout 1871 which espoused its somewhat contradictory position, supporting the principle of military reform whilst remaining determined to oppose and decry the actions of the Liberal Party. 'The Point of Disagreement Amongst Army Reformers', initially confirmed that, broadly speaking, all were in agreement with the main points of Cardwell's scheme. Encouraged by the experiences of the French and Prussian armies, the need for a bigger army in Britain and more professional soldiers educated in the science of war were deemed real and present issues. Localisation, short service and the amalgamation of regular and auxiliary forces were confirmed as suitable proposals and the improvement of soldiers' conditions and a scheme for offering 'deserving' soldiers civil appointments as 'government gifts' were also endorsed.⁴²

The two sides of the debate over the abolition of purchase in the officer corps were also afforded attention in the press. Social mobility was certainly a clear target in the War Office's desire to abolish the system, but the middle-classes, not the ordinary soldier bar the most uncommonly talented, were the principal target. Despite this, opposition in the press was founded upon a broader unrest, highlighted in journals such as the *Edinburgh Review*, over the feasibility of creating an officer who was at once highly educated and promoted from the ranks. They were, the article asserted, 'two incompatible things for the simple reason that highly educated men are not now found in the ranks'.⁴³ This statement indicates clearly an aspect of the public approach to the question of reform which held at its core firm preconceptions of the soldier and the military hierarchy,

⁴² 'The Point of Disagreement Amongst Army Reformers' in *Pall Mall Gazette* (14 February 1871), issue 1873.

⁴³ 'The Point of Disagreement Amongst Army Reformers' in *Pall Mall Gazette* (14 February 1871), issue 1873.

many of which as this thesis will later argue were fundamental to the social ostracism against which the reformers struggled.

In some quarters, the announcement of the War Office's schemes met with gratification. The *Bradford Observer* for instance welcomed the reforms even suggesting that the Franco-Prussian War had led to a preparedness in Government to act. 'But for the war', the article stated, 'it is almost certain that the Government would not have meddled – at any rate, just yet – with the question of army reform.'⁴⁴ The nature of Gladstone's government indicates that domestic issues and social reform would have taken precedence had the European hostilities not caused alarm, the article argued. Moreover, the inclusion of purchase abolition by the Liberals gave rise to suggestions of a social transformation in the army bringing to an end its use as a social club for the aristocracy and in time the traditional resistance to change it had inherited. This had a considerable impact on the entire army hierarchy the *Bradford Observer* argued, since thousands of capable potential officers and many a hero had been denied to the nation since such men would not enlist if the rank of Sergeant was the ceiling of their prospects after twenty years of service. As demonstrated by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, *The Bradford Observer's* equation of mobility within the military hierarchy with promotion from the ranks, indicates a persisting perception that direct entry to the officer corps was still the reserve of the upper-classes. In the case of the *Bradford Observer*, however, reform was welcomed and expected.

Despite the overwhelming influence the Liberal Party enjoyed over the press in the early 1870s, agreement over the necessity for reform and the added impetus of the

⁴⁴ 'The Government Scheme of Army Reform', in *The Bradford Observer* (17 February 1871), issue 2543.

Franco-Prussian War, opposition was vocal and widespread. By early summer 1871, the principal criticism levelled at Cardwell was one of reticence. The schemes had been announced, it was argued in numerous newspapers including Cardiff's *Western Mail*, yet the precise plan of action and complete costings had not yet been forthcoming.⁴⁵ The *Pall Mall Gazette* gleefully repeated the Surveyor-General's label of the War Office's actions as 'factious'.⁴⁶ Cardwell's reluctance to provide extensive detail into his schemes attracted a considerable level of criticism during May and June 1871, in many respects distracting from the larger issues of the reforms themselves and providing critics with welcome ammunition with which to attack the Liberals. The chief purveyor of this criticism continued to be the *Pall Mall Gazette* which in June published a further article attacking the Government's taciturn stance and general competency:

The truth is that there is scarcely a member in the House, except a few radical theorists and idea-mongers, who would not rejoice to see the bill withdrawn or otherwise decently done for... Whenever [the Liberals] pour forth on the subject (which they rarely venture to do) it is seen that they contain nothing but windy aspiration and poetical promise, baseless and worthless as a gypsy's prophesy.⁴⁷

The initial reception to Cardwell's 1871 reforms was one of fundamental approval but prolonged and impassioned opposition where means or method were concerned. The status or nature of the soldier was at this stage of less concern.

After a period of calm punctuated only by the routine Army Estimates, attention turned again to the army in the Spring of 1872, this time in relation to recruiting. Cardwell's usual economy of detail encouraged familiar lamentations that little criticism or praise could be directed at the War Office in the absence of more information. However, the prospect of reform to enlistment and the development of localisation was met with

⁴⁵ 'The Army Reorganisation Debate' in *Western Mail* (Cardiff) (13 May 1871), issue 637.

⁴⁶ 'Factious Opposition to the Army Bill' in *The Pall Mall Gazette* (13 May 1871), issue 1949.

⁴⁷ 'The True Position of the Army Bill' in *The Pall Mall Gazette* (12 June 1871), issue 1974.

general enthusiasm and some scepticism. As the *Morning Post* termed it, the better known and understood the schemes became, the more ground they lost in the estimation of ‘qualified critics’.⁴⁸ With the memory of the Franco-Prussian War still sharp, the state of the militia and the nation’s ability to meet a similar threat was still high on the agenda. The quality of the Regular troops and even the abolition of the purchase system was of lesser significance in the *Morning Post*’s estimations and the localisation of the regimental system received brief but positive acclaim.⁴⁹

The *Blackburn Standard* relayed for its readers the stance of the main London newspapers noting that for *The Times*, *The Standard*, the *Morning Post*, the *Daily News* and *The Telegraph*, Cardwell’s efforts to date and plans for further reform had met with the instincts and inclinations of the House and were likely to greatly enhance the nation’s defences.⁵⁰ Despite the positivity from the London publications however, there remained a general sense of unease amongst the press over Cardwell’s schemes.

The *Lancaster Gazette* was particularly sceptical, accusing supporters of the reforms, including *The Times*, of naivety. It suggested that the unpopularity of Gladstone’s Government following the controversies over the ‘wasted parliament’ of the previous summer and other recent tragedies had damaged confidence in the Admiralty and the Government, leaving the reforms of the War Office as the only hope to ‘squeeze a good and hopeful word’ from the acts of that Government.⁵¹ On the other hand, however, the

⁴⁸ ‘As Mr Cardwell’s plan for Army Reorganisation becomes more known and understood...’ in *The Morning Post* (28 March 1872), issue 30671.

⁴⁹ ‘At last we have the scheme of the Government for the Reorganisation of the Army’, in *The Morning Post* (23 February 1872), issue 30643, and ‘As Mr Cardwell’s plan for Army Reorganisation becomes more known and understood...’ in *The Morning Post* (28 March 1872), issue 30671.

⁵⁰ ‘Army Reorganisation’ in *The Blackburn Standard* (28 February 1872), issue 1940.

⁵¹ ‘The Army Scheme’ in *The Lancaster Gazette, and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmoreland, Yorkshire, &c.* (16 March 1872), issue 4431.

newspaper accused Cardwell and his reforming associates of interfering in the military. ‘Mr Cardwell is definitely in earnest’, mused the *Lancaster Gazette* in its lead article, ‘but that he is still continuing to “meddle” with matters, for information regarding which he must wholly depend of the judgement of others who are not like himself responsible, we are most certain...and that...“muddling” will be the most probable result.’⁵²

For the *Lancaster Gazette*, local concerns were at the root of its anxiety. The Duke of Lancaster’s Own and the Artillery Volunteers faced downsizing under Cardwell’s reorganisation. For others, the technicalities of the schemes, especially of short service, were cause for concern. John Holms, MP for Liverpool had highlighted the delicacy of the balance by which the reforms need to be established in order to achieve efficiency and economy. The intricacies of short service were further discussed as the press and public struggled to make sense of the scheme. One letter to the *Lancaster Gazette* asked whether six years in the Colours really constituted short service. Especially when one considered the continental armies, had three years to train a soldier. Six years with the civilising effects of family and friends exchanged for barrack life, idleness and tropical and venereal disease was a potent deterrent, it was stated, and if the class of men enlisting were to improve, short service would have to herald a change in such conditions.⁵³

Localisation was intended to have far wider an impact than the majority of Cardwell’s reforms. It was the first step in encouraging a strong county-regiment affiliation and raising the social value of the soldier. Despite this, the reforms, which came into effect

⁵² ‘The Army Scheme’, in *The Lancaster Gazette* (2 March 1872), issue 4429.

⁵³ ‘Army Reform’ in *The Daily News* (11 March 1872), issue 8071.

in July 1872 and April 1873, were met with limited interest and public sensation. Local newspapers delivered very little in the way of a grassroots response, choosing to publish only what took place in the debates of the House of Commons and what information was officially released. In late February 1872 the announcement of Cardwell's plans to localise the British Army appeared in several newspapers up and down the country published the announcement. Newspapers in Leeds, Birmingham, London, Southampton and Cornwall all published for their readers a list of all the combinations of linked battalions and corresponding depots to be enforced.⁵⁴ It was a familiar pattern, with statistical information populating the articles in much the same vein as the Army Estimates, with very little local colour or analysis.

The *Morning Post* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* took particular interest in the announcement of the War Office's localisation plans in the February of 1872. Their commentaries were typically lukewarm. Once again, the necessity of reform was central to the newspapers' rationale, the *Pall Mall Gazette* even adopting a 'we told you so' stance claiming that the principles of localisation had been espoused by them for some time. The *Morning Post* praised Cardwell for introducing a 'great principle' in a 'thorough and masterly manner'.⁵⁵ Such glowing words were over-shadowed however by the subsequent and immediate reminder that the decision to introduce such schemes had been politically unanimous. More generally, the *Morning Post* was sceptical of localisation, describing it as a, 'step in the right direction' but also claiming it was

⁵⁴ 'The Localisation of the Army' in *The Birmingham Daily Post* (27 February 1872), issue 4248; 'The Localisation of the Army' in *The Leeds Mercury* (29 February 1872), issue 10573; 'The Localisation of the Army' in *The Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle etc.* (2 March 1872), issue 4126; 'The New Army Districts' in *The Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet and General Advertiser* (9 March 1872), issue 3581.

⁵⁵ 'The more Mr. Cardwell's scheme is considered the more it appears to consist solely of a realisation of the great principle of localisation' in *The Morning Post* (24 February 1872), issue 30644.

‘makeshift’ and that improvements to recruiting were potentially ‘nought but a myth’ if the home battalions were unable to maintain a presence within their recruiting district.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* shared the *Morning Post*’s mixed appraisal, approving of the principle of localisation, whilst shying away from outright support of the Liberals: ‘Whatever criticism we may have to make must be reserved for the details – the principles are thoroughly sound’.⁵⁶ The great advantage the *Pall Mall Gazette* foresaw lay not in enhanced recruiting and strengthened local military-civilian relations but in the future effectiveness and role of the Militia. Improved connections between the Regulars, the Reserves and the Militia and Volunteers, with direct recruitment for the former and greater training for the latter, were perceived by the newspapers to represent the most promising aspects of the reform movement. Socio-military considerations were broadly dismissed.

For the London papers, the priorities of army reform lay not in the social status of the soldier or in the unappealing nature of military service which had fuelled the perpetual struggles in recruiting. The question remained one of efficiency, particularly with regards to the Militia, Reserves and Regulars and their organisation as three branches of a unified force.⁵⁷ The London publications might have been expected to maintain a higher perspective upon the reforms than local newspapers, engaging more closely with the political debate in the House of Commons than local implications. Broadly, however, this was not the case. Local newspapers that did choose to address the issue followed the lead of their London counterparts, directing their attentions to the more generalised questions of efficiency and overlooking the attempt at improved civil-

⁵⁶ ‘Localisation in Army Reform’ in *Pall Mall Gazette* (24 February 1872), issue 2194.

⁵⁷ ‘Our Prospects of Army Reform’ in *Pall Mall Gazette* (22 February 1872), issue 2192.

military relations. Efforts to encourage closer affiliation between localised regiments and population centres had largely escaped the press.

THE CHILDERS REFORMS IN THE PRESS

By the close of the 1870s, Cardwell's reforms and the soldiers they had produced were coming under intense scrutiny. Long-term schemes such as the 1870 Army Enlistment Act had enjoyed their honeymoon period and their results were encouraging considerable anxiety. The *Belfast News-Letter* summarised for its readers the voices of concern emanating from the press, politicians and the army. The *Telegraph* had described it as a 'notorious fact' that the army had neither the quantity nor quality in the troops it was producing to face the potential threats to Britain. The Duke of Cambridge himself had informed Parliament that localisation and short service had rendered the home battalions 'mere depots' composed of 'boys'.⁵⁸ Letters to the Editor of the *Morning Post* highlight the confliction with which the British public viewed their reformed military. Some, including ex-soldiers, wrote to express dismay, dismissing Cardwell's schemes as 'an unmitigated failure'.⁵⁹ They condemned the Government demanding, 'what in the name of all that is sacred are the authorities about not to see and protest against the green boys that still fill up our ranks now'.⁶⁰

In the midst of such anxiety, the appointment of the Airey Commission had been met with approval in the press. It will be an 'unspeakable relief to military men' claimed in one letter in the *Morning Post*, which likened the announcement of the Commission to

⁵⁸ 'Our Army' in *The Belfast News-Letter* (22 May 1879), issue 19878.

⁵⁹ 'Our Army' in *The Morning Post* (26 May 1879), issue 33357.

⁶⁰ 'Our Army' in *The Morning Post* (23 May 1879), issue 33355.

‘awakening from a hideous dream’.⁶¹ The *Morning Post* was notably dismissive of Cardwell’s schemes, lamenting that ‘We pride ourselves on being an eminently practical nation and yet our military system is at the present moment exemplifying the evils of allowing doctrines to meddle with our army... There is localisation which is not local and mobilisation which is not mobile’.⁶² In particular, the youth of short-service soldiers was raised as a concern. Fuelled by the Duke of Cambridge’s proclamation that he wished to see fewer boys and more men in the army, various papers including the *Lancaster Gazette* denounced the short-service system as not working ‘advantageously’ and as being ‘gravely at fault’ for the current inefficiencies in the army, especially in raising battalions for service in South Africa.⁶³

Though negative, concern over short-service soldiers indicates greater engagement in public and political discourse with the members of the rank and file specifically, a movement away from the pragmatic and proprietary relationship with its army that Britain had had in the late-1860s and early-1870s. It was only a limited increase however. The nature of the soldier was coming under more direct scrutiny than before, but the question still remained one of cold efficiency: how could an army be raised and maintained efficiently and inexpensively and be equal to the tasks expected of a global imperial force? The experiences and conditions for the soldiers themselves and the nature of the soldier, beyond his age, did not feature to any great extent and Tommy Atkins continued to occupy a shadowy position in the background of the public debate.

⁶¹ ‘An Army in its Teens’ in *The Morning Post* (23 May 1879), issue 33354.

⁶² ‘We Pride Ourselves on Being an Eminently Sensible Nation’ in *The Morning Post* (25 February 1879), issue 33280.

⁶³ ‘The State of the Army’ in *The Lancaster Gazette* (24 May 1879), issue 4931.

Press interest in the army generally was relatively strong, and it was a relationship the War Office and Horse Guards were keen to foster. As well as the use of press advertising to aid enlistment, in which the new War Office administration under Childers was about to invest, the influence of the press in the broader question of reform was also sought. Sir Garnet Wolseley appealed to the nation's war correspondents and journalists to 'bring useful light to bear upon the dark parts of our military system'.⁶⁴ It was an appeal which would mark the next wave of military reform. Following the Airey Commission and the start of a new Liberal government in 1880, the necessity for reform was once again under debate. It did not generate particular enthusiasm. The *Pall Mall Gazette* announced that with a return of Trevelyan to the debate, the reorganisation of the army was about to restart and the reformers were likely to get their way again.

In comparison to the earlier reforms, the reporting on the second wave under Childers reflected a tinge of reticence and pessimism. Dissatisfaction was high and opinions were polarised over whether the systems implemented in 1870-74 could and should be reinforced or reversed. The *Pall Mall Gazette* highlighted the failure of the last Conservative Government to enhance the military's strength when fighting concurrent wars and voiced concern over the loss of valuable NCOs from the ranks. It did not look promising for the soldiers themselves, however, as the *Pall Mall Gazette* dismissed calls for improvement in their terms and conditions announcing, 'the pay is already high and the comforts considerable'.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ 'Sir Garnet Wolseley on the Army and the Press' in the *Birmingham Daily Post* (21 June 1880), issue 6851.

⁶⁵ 'The Next Step in Army Reform' in *Pall Mall Gazette* (18 November 1880), issue 4911.

The reforms to the recruiting service, outlined in Section I, attracted some attention in the press. They did not incite the same trepidation or support of the wider reforms because they did not cut to the core of the military organisation to the same extent. However, the aims behind their introduction and their necessity were recognised. Furthermore, there was evidently some novelty in the ideas being developed.

Moonshine encapsulated a sense of mild bemusement at the army's attempts to extend the olive branch, and its recruiting tentacles, into British provincial society with, 'The Post Office Undertakes the Enlistment of Recruits'. (See Figure 1) Illustrated by John Proctor, the cartoon depicts a matronly woman, accompanied by a young man, addressing an attendant at the counter of a post office. The caption reads, 'Please Miss, I've brought my young man to be a soldier, and I'll take the five shillings in stamps'.⁶⁶ The counter is partitioned with one-half designated 'STAMPS' and the other 'RECRUITS'.

Proctor identifies the presence of recruiting in post offices as something of an incongruity. The awkward and potentially intrusive place it occupied in the organisation is highlighted with the presence of a new counter for recruits occupying half the desk-space alongside a counter for stamps - the archetypal business of the post office. Furthermore, the cartoon mocks gently the convenience in the set-up of recruiting in the post office. The woman requests that she take the five shillings, presumably a 'bringers fee', in postage stamps.

⁶⁶ J. Proctor, 'The Post Office Undertakes the Enlistment of Recruits' in *Moonshine* (1 December 1883), p. 262. Proctor, a respected cartoonist of the latter-nineteenth century, worked with a number of *Punch*'s rivals including as a graphic journalist for the *Illustrated London News* (1859), as political cartoonist for *Judy* in the late-1860s and also as a cover designer for *Funny Folks* (1874) before drawing for *Moonshine* and later *Fun* in the 1880s and 1890s.

Despite the novelty of the 1880-2 recruiting reforms, they were received with general approval, the professionalisation of the recruiting service in particular. ‘The proposed system... is very much a step in the right direction’, wrote the *Belfast News-Letter* in January 1882.⁶⁷ From a civic sense at least, further movements to remove the recruiting officer from stalking the street or tavern and ensnaring unsuspecting locals with the lure of petty cash and drink, were welcome. At a cultural level, the removal of that dark element of the nation’s military identity was also valued. The underhand methods of the recruiter were seen as a discredit to the service and to the country.

Recounting for their readers a report by special telegram on a speech made by Childers to his constituents at Pontefract in January 1882, several newspapers including the *Birmingham Daily Post* and *Freeman’s Journal* conveyed the approval of the War Minister’s strategy as a whole.⁶⁸ ‘He does not wish for great change in the army’, the *Birmingham Daily Post* announced, but instead aims to ‘correct defects, supply omissions and to carry to their legitimate conclusion the principles which Parliament had endorsed’.⁶⁹ The articles noted the applause Childers received in his announcements and reflected that whilst his ambitions were none too great, if they met with the approval of his constituents then he could be contented. Childers was perceived as having listened to the complaints of the regimental officers and the outspoken opposition of Lord Roberts in 1880 and addressed their issues accordingly. The extension of short service from six

⁶⁷ ‘Army recruiting’ in *The Belfast News-Letter* (4 January 1882), issue 20744.

⁶⁸ ‘Mr Childers, M.P., on Army Reform’ in *The Birmingham Daily Post* (20 January 1882), issue 7347; in *Freeman’s Journal and Commercial Advertiser*, (20 January 1882), issue N/A; *The Leeds Mercury* (20 January 1882), issue 13661.

⁶⁹ ‘Mr Childers, M.P., on Army Reform’ in *The Birmingham Daily Post* (20 January 1882), issue 7347.

to seven years, for instance, was hailed as a step in the right direction by the *Western Mail* which claimed that the changes to the system had 'improved it very much'.⁷⁰

Childers took the opportunity in 1882, following the wars in Egypt and the Sudan, to reinforce the War Office's stance that the reforms over the previous two years had been successful. Despite some criticism of the army's organisation and mobilisation in response to the Mahdi threat and of the conduct of the troops themselves, Childers claimed that the experiences had proven that his reforms had resulted in some improvement. 'I see no reason for increasing our army', he announced in a letter addressed to a public meeting in Pontefract which had expressed support for his work and for the Government in Egypt and Ireland. 'But if we have already done something to improve its organisation, I hope that any lessons we have now learned will enable us to carry that improvement still further.'⁷¹

The debate over the reforms in the press following their introduction was enlivened and dominated by the two powerful military personalities, Lords Wolseley and Roberts. The former, on his return from Egypt in the December 1882, was quoted in London's *Daily News* praising the reforms of his political associates. The article reported that Wolseley had claimed in a speech that 'that campaign had proved...that the morale of our army had been greatly improved and the fighting quality of our men fully maintained'.⁷² It was evident to the *Daily News* that Lord Wolseley was in support of the War Office reforms and confident in the abilities and standards of the army, 'The reforms in the army had, in his opinion, made it the finest in the world... He knew that it was not

⁷⁰ 'The State of the British Army' in *The Western Mail* (17 March 1882), issue 4010.

⁷¹ 'Mr Childers on the Army' in *Pall Mall Gazette* (19 October 1882), issue 5503.

⁷² 'Lord Wolseley on Army Reform' in *Daily News* London (5 December 1882), issue 11432.

perfect, but there was a firm determination on the part of the authorities to make it as perfect as they could make it, and worthy of the nation it represented.’⁷³

Wolseley’s words came in the wake of public tensions with Lord Roberts, the likes of which had shocked the British public. General Roberts’s opinions on reform in the army were established in his 1883 article ‘Free Trade in the Army’ which he republished in the *Nineteenth Century* in 1884.⁷⁴ The article sought to qualify and elaborate upon a speech he had delivered at Mansion House in 1880 which had generated considerable concern over his criticism of short service and apparent disapproval of the army’s organisation. Wolseley had responded to Roberts’s comments in defence of short service fuelling even greater public alarm as the nation’s two most respected generals were in opposition. The War Office had even been forced to rebuke the two soldiers in the House of Commons.

‘Free Trade in the Army’ was reviewed in *The Preston Guardian*. The article highlights the extent to which public opinion, despite the abundance of military statistics and information available, was reliant on the word of the military and political authorities. In spite of the strong opinions on military matters expressed in the press, and a willingness to criticise and condemn the army and the reforms, the *Preston Guardian* also highlights a latent insecurity in the British public. An unease is revealed in the alarm caused by individuals in authority, particularly from a military background, expressing dissatisfaction or disapproval of the systems currently in place. ‘It is satisfactory’, the

⁷³ ‘Lord Wolseley on Army Reform’ in *Daily News* (5 December 1882), issue 11432.

⁷⁴ TNA: WO 33/52: F. Roberts, Lieutenant-General Sir, ‘Free Trade in the Army’ published in the *Nineteenth Century* (1884), reproduced in *Four Papers Recently Prepared or Referred to by General Lord Roberts with Reference to the subjects connected with the Report on the Terms and Conditions of Service in the Army* (The War Office, London: Harrison and Sons, Printers in ordinary to Her Majesty, 1892), pp.1-14.

Preston Guardian wrote, ‘to feel that the one great authority who was understood to be opposed to our present system of army organisation has now plainly expressed himself in favour of it.’⁷⁵ The public and the press were comfortable criticising their military but were less comfortable in having their fears confirmed.

The conclusion of Childers’s term at the War Office did not see a close to the debate over army organisation but to an extent, public interests had been sated. For the soldier, the growing awareness of his status was just beginning. The late-1880s and the 1890s would see a growing trend in the discussion of military efficiency from the perspective of the men from whom the ranks were populated, seeking to improve the military by improving the conditions for the soldier. The debate proceeded at a gentle rate, with the occasional rise in interest and criticism as the press and public continued to consider what would make the army an appealing professional career. In 1886 for instance, the *Morning Post* published letters from civilians and army officers discussing methods by which young unemployed men of education could be encouraged to enlist in the ranks with the hope of obtaining a commission in due course.⁷⁶

Without current reforms taking place, the periodical cartoonists adopted an occasional, critical view of the War Office’s administration of military affairs. The army’s treatment of the soldier came under the spotlight increasingly during the mid-to-late-1880s particularly in relation to accusations of malnourishment and underfeeding in the ranks. ‘Comfort for Tommy Atkins’, for instance, took a sympathetic stance on the suffering endured by troops during the wars in the Sudan. (See Figure 2) The cartoon features a

⁷⁵ ‘The State of our Army’ in *The Preston Guardian* (4 November 1882), issue 3634.

⁷⁶ ‘How to Make the Army More Popular as a Profession’ in *The Morning Post* (20 February 1886), issue 35466.

portly General addressing an emaciated soldier. Accompanied by a short poem, it mimics the attitude of the authorities to ill health contracted by soldiers in Africa as they prepare to return home, dismissing it as something they were 'prepared for' and 'accustomed to'.⁷⁷ *Funny Folks* further highlighted the poor food provision in the army in 1889 with 'The Skeleton Army – a Plea for Alterations in their Rations'.⁷⁸ (See Figure 3) Another cynical comment on what the caption identifies as a 'burning issue', the cartoon itself depicts a variety of scenarios in which weakly and thin soldiers struggle in their day to day roles.

The concern demonstrated for the soldier in these two cartoons is indicative of the start of a changing public attitude towards soldiers at the close of the 1880s in Britain. In many respects it is a concern encouraged partly by years of military reform and realignment which drew to the attention of the British public the fact that the soldier was a man and that the ranks of the army were composed of fellow countrymen. This transition lagged behind the reforms themselves particularly since discussion of reform primarily concerned the fastest and most cost-effective means of raising an army and therefore encouraged an impersonal attitude.

The impact of the reforms would arise occasionally as the 1880s and 1890s progressed, generally in isolated cases or particularly in relation to the continuing concern over young soldiers. 'Our Blackguards in the Guards – an Evil of Short Service', published in 1890, demonstrates how the schemes of Cardwell and Childers continued to attract occasional direct criticism, as did the soldiers themselves. (See Figure 4) The cartoonists

⁷⁷ Unknown, 'Comfort for Tommy Atkins' in *Judy* (20 May 1885), p.233.

⁷⁸ Anon., 'The Skeleton Army – A Plea for Alterations in their Rations' in *Funny Folks* (9 March 1889), pp.76 – 77.

took great pleasure in playing with the notion of youthful soldiers, as Chapter 5 will discuss. ‘Our Blackguard in the Guards’ is a particular attack on the soldiers themselves. The ignominious position of the passed-out drunken young ranker cuts a stark figure and the disapproving expression of the Duke of Cambridge is shaming. The caption further singles out young soldiers as a problematic and undesirable element, ‘Too many kids, your Royal Highness. The seasoned men are alright. Cannot some way be found to keep down the kids and keep up the soldiers’; the indication is that the short-service men barely constitute soldiers at all.⁷⁹ The poster above the two figures reads ‘Men Wanted’.

The press reveals that interest in the army reforms of 1870-4 and 1880-2 diminished but did not disappear. Nor did the knowledge that the problems they were intended to address were never fully remedied. As late as 1897, *Judy* featured a cartoon by Jack Butler Yeats entitled ‘The Pleasures of the Recruiting Sergeant’. (See Figure 5) Depicting a dishevelled recruiter in a tavern leaning over a drunken civilian announcing, ‘the party on the settle has taken “two drivers pints” a cigar and the Queen’s shilling’.⁸⁰ Precisely the practice the reforms were intended to eradicate, the old ways of recruiting and the old problems of manpower remained with the army and the nation.

CONCLUSION

As Section I established, Cardwell’s arrival at the War Office in 1868 accelerated a movement of large scale reform to the army organisation which held as one of its fundamental objectives the social rehabilitation and popularisation of the soldier in the

⁷⁹ Unknown, ‘Our Blackguard in the Guards – An Evil of Short Service’ in *Moonshine* (27 September 1890), p. 148.

⁸⁰ J. B. Yeats, ‘The Pleasures of the Recruiting Sergeant’ in *Judy* (24 March 1897), p. 143. Jack Butler Yeats was a renowned cartoonist and painter. He retired from satirical illustrations early in the twentieth century but later returned to illustrate for *Punch* under the pseudonym W. Bird. See Bryant and Heneage, *Dictionary of British Cartoonists*, pp.245-6.

civilian society. The attitudes of the press to the Cardwell-Childers Reforms do not necessarily reflect the attitudes of the public at large. However, they do frame the reforms in terms of their presentation to the British people and offer some indication as to the reception they received. The newspapers indicate a readiness for change and a consensus on the need for improvement and reorganisation. What they do not show for some time during and after the introduction of the reforms is an equation between the efficiency of the army and the social status of the soldier. The principal concern lay in economics, with the social impact on the army's strength a less immediate concern.

However, as Chapter 5 will proceed to further illustrate, in time the impact of the Cardwell-Childers Reforms on encouraging a revision of attitudes towards the soldier does become apparent. This change is not necessarily directly attributable to the schemes; there are no reports of men enlisting *en masse* in 1882 as a result of the introduction of post office aided recruitment for instance. What the prolonged period of War Office reform did achieve is a public readiness to perceive and accept that change was or had taken place. Supporters of the soldier referenced the War Office schemes, often in vague terms, to back claims that the undesirable soldier of old was gone and that the new soldier was reputable and still disliked only because civilian ignorance.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SOLDIER, THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

INTRODUCTION

For the British soldier, integration into Victorian society was not reliant simply upon the efforts of the War Office, although the reform debate did raise his profile. The early 1870s demonstrated an impersonal relationship between the British public and its army. But as the decades progressed, that relationship developed. Having explored in Chapter 4 the reception of the Cardwell-Childers Reforms in the press and the implications those reactions had on the position of the soldier in domestic society, Chapter 5 will consider the position of the soldier directly. A great deal of the progress the soldier made in acquiring legitimacy in civilian society took place beyond the War Office. The attitudes and perspectives of the British public on the soldier cannot be viewed purely from a political or economic perspective. The soldier gained increasing social and cultural currency over the closing decades of the nineteenth century as the public developed a fascination with military life and anxiety over issues such as national masculinity or the calibre of the modern soldier following Cardwell.

'THE SOLDIER' IN THE PRESS, 1868 - 1890

'The soldier' as an identity and as a member of the military received only cursory engagement prior to the mid-1870s. The Cardwell Reforms reignited some interest in the status of the army. It was a climate the Ashantee War, which climaxed in 1874 reinforced. The conflict was also significant in raising the profile of 'the soldier' as a component of the military establishment. The return of troops from the Ashantee led to calls in the press for efforts to be made to ensure a warm welcome upon their arrival at

Portsmouth. ‘Every effort is being made’, announced the *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronical*, ‘to secure for our soldiers and sailors, on their arrival at Portsmouth from the Gold Coast (now daily expected), the heartiest welcome’.¹ These sentiments were echoed in a letter to the editor of the *Leeds Mercury* signed, ‘a friend of the soldier’. ‘Our hearts have all joined in the enthusiastic welcome given to our brave Ashantee troops on their arrival in Portsmouth’, the letter stated, before bemoaning the absence of reputable hostelry available to soldiers upon their disembarkation.² Prior to this, references to ‘the soldier’ as a collective or as an individual were not commonly used in public discourse concerning the military.

The welfare of the troops is one slight exception; the issue was liable to come under some scrutiny if the issue bore any impact on the army’s efficiency. *Punch*, in the summer of 1870 illustrated this pragmatic, rather than caring, attitude. ‘Army and Navy Intelligence’ criticises the C-in-C Field-Marshal HRH the Duke of Cambridge for issuing an order to regimental COs that it is to their discretion to decide whether or not to march the men in hot weather. (See Figure 6) The illustration, possibly by the renowned cartoonist John Tenniel, attacks the C-in-C for passing the responsibility onto his commanders whilst vowing to punish them if they make the wrong choice. In the accompanying illustration a soldier struggles under the hot sun whilst on the march. The interest is primarily in the politics of command rather than the safeguarding of the men but there is nevertheless some concern shown for the soldier’s welfare.³ Besides this, and certain other examples, such as crime and statistics of military strength or

¹ ‘The Return of Soldiers and Sailors from the Ashantee War’ in *The Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronical* (14 March 1874), issue 4338.

² ‘An Appeal for British Soldiers’ in *Leeds Mercury* (1 April 1874), issue 11224.

³ Unknown, ‘Army and Navy Intelligence’ in *Punch* (6 August 1870), p. 61. The identity of the illustrator for this cartoon is unclear. The monogram is very similar to that of John Tenniel, only inverted, but the writing present on the illustration dismisses any possibility that the image itself may be inverted.

casualties, 'the soldier' did not feature to any great degree in the British press of the 1870s.

1874 registered a slight change in climate. For the first time, the British press began to field questions which scrutinized or praised the soldier specifically, rather than considering the army only as an institution. The *Belfast News-letter* in October re-published an article from the *Naval and Military Gazette* which presented, 'what our soldiers are worth against others', arguing that the national constitution, voluntary enlistment and the spirit of the men rendered the British soldier superior in terms of 'appearance' and the 'precision' with which he did his work.⁴ *The Standard* also published an article, re-printed in *The Aberdeen Journal*, which highlighted links drawn by the Duke of Cambridge between the army and the moral standards of the country stating that 'without a substantial army and navy...the nation would be devoid of moral influence...and there could be no moral influence without power to back it up'.⁵

In light of the Duke's assertions, the *Standard* emphasised the need to ensure that the army was well financed in line with the prosperity of the country and that soldiers were properly looked after; 'It may be argued that a soldier gets lodging, light, fuel, medical attendance, but against these we must see danger, exile and the necessary but unpleasant restraints of discipline.'⁶ To a greater extent than before, the position of the soldier as a man and as a public servant was considered alongside the operational requirements of the army and the nation. Wars such as the eventful Zulu campaign aided in encouraging greater focus on the soldier. 'Our Brave Soldiers', marking the departure of the 60th

⁴ 'What our Soldiers are Worth against Others' in *The Belfast News-letter* (8 October 1874), issue 56075.

⁵ 'Our Soldiers' in *The Aberdeen Journal* (23 December 1874), issue 6624.

⁶ 'Our Soldiers' in *The Aberdeen Journal* (23 December 1874), issue 6624.

Rifles from Colchester for South Africa, greatly extolled the virtues of the soldier and praised his heroism:

Amongst the soldiers themselves the most vehement enthusiasm was exhibited, which showed itself not less in the disappointment of those not included in the order to march, than in the self-congratulations of those who had been selected for this honourable, if dangerous mission. Brave soldiers!⁷

The article also conveyed an unusual degree of empathy, identifying the sacrifices and the risks a soldier took in the act of embarking on his duty: 'It is not that they are without the hearts of sons, of husbands, of brothers or of lovers beating in their manly bosoms, to feel what it is to be separated from their loved ones for such a cause'.⁸

As the Cardwell Reforms took effect, the perception of the soldier as a pertinent part of the national and military stage began to take root. Broader national changes added to the evolving perception of the soldier. William Henry Boucher's 'The Recruiting Difficulty' for instance, drew a direct link between the quality of recruits and education and social discipline.⁹ (See Figure 7) Under the Liberal Government education was reformed through the 1870 Education Act, establishing formal national management and school provision. *Judy's* 'The Recruiting Difficulty' highlights the War Office's drive for a higher class of recruit, placing the responsibility on the state, and the school system to produce a higher calibre of adult for both the nation and the army. In the background are two young undesirables in reference to whom the soldier refers, 'yonder fellows are no good to us'. It indicates that the quality of the army is only as good as the

⁷ 'Our Brave Soldiers' in *Essex Standard, West Suffolk Gazette and Eastern Counties' Advertiser* (22 February 1879), issue 2515.

⁸ 'Our Brave Soldiers' in *Essex Standard* (22 February 1879), issue 2515.

⁹ W. H. Boucher, 'The Recruiting Difficulty' in *Judy* (14 April 1875), p.64. Boucher was a talented cartoonist responsible for the 'large cartoon' in *Judy* between 1868 and 1887. For more information see M. Bryant and S. Heneage, *Dictionary of British Cartoonists and Caricaturists 1730-1980* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994), pp.26-7.

condition of the young men the nation produced and that through reforms in the military and schooling the army might benefit.

The late-1870s and the opening months of 1880 demonstrated a growing engagement with the character of 'the soldier'. There were positive aspects to this attention, such as a greater appreciation of the dangers and sacrifices involved in military service and the need to ensure the government offered the soldier a fair deal. There were also less positive elements which acknowledged the continuing presence and arguable necessity for the 'bad soldier'. Such characters, it was argued, might demonstrate a corresponding disregard for their own safety in battle and prove exceptional soldiers. One letter to the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* addressed the issue, acknowledging the expertise of an experienced officer who had attested that 'blackguards' did make the best soldiers.¹⁰ An article considering the numbers of soldiers still in prison and not discharged further noted the occasional inevitability of a lower class of man entering the ranks, particularly when recruiting was stretched,

At a time when the ranks require strengthening the recruiting officer cannot afford to be scrupulously particular. Provided a man is sound in wind and limb and of an acceptable age, and he is not notoriously an evil doer, he is accounted "rough stuff" good enough to be converted into an efficient red-jacket.¹¹

Even these articles however, which to an extent perpetuated the perception that the soldier was of a low class, present a rather more balanced contemplation acknowledging the value 'rough' men might offer the military and presenting context which dissuades a generalisation of soldiers' characters.

¹⁰ 'What are Soldiers Made of?' in *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* (22 July 1879), issue 7750.

¹¹ 'Soldiers in Prison' in *The Graphic* (13 September 1879), issue 511.

The reasons against more desirable men enlisting were also questioned. *Funny Folks* asked as much in the cartoon ‘Why do not Working Men Enlist?’ in October 1880.¹² (See Figure 8) In reference to an *Evening Standard* article highlighting the persistent recruiting difficulties, the cartoonist Warwick Reynolds explored the different grievances which might dissuade men from enlisting. Under a thin veil of humour the appeal of life as a soldier is examined, depicting military existence as one in which basic liberties are forfeited and which culminates in possible incapacitation with none of the promised glory or respect.¹³ Reynolds suggests that the reasons for the recruiting difficulties are not difficult to fathom. It is interesting to note that public discrimination of the soldier is identified in the fifth cell, as a policeman ejects a sergeant from a ticket office. The caption facetiously presents the incident as a positive, ‘He will be tolerated in no place of public resort so cannot waste his money there’. However, it is self-evident that this is an indictment of the public prejudice and a flippant dismissal of the question of why should not working men enlist.

Indeed, the satirical cartoons in particular appeared to engage with the realities of life as a soldier. The following month Reynolds’s strip entitled ‘Reforms in Regimentals’ appeared in *Funny Folks*, highlighting the impact a new War Office scheme to sell old or spare uniforms had on the soldier’s ability to meet the standards of appearance demanded. (See Figure 9) The caption to the fifth cell, depicting a rag-tag rank of privates notes, “‘The soldier has been in the habit of clipping stuff from one suit to repair another.’” He is now obliged to patch with anything he can get. Pleasing effect on

¹² W. Reynolds, ‘Why do not Working Men Enlist?’ in *Funny Folks* (30 October 1880), p.347. Warwick Reynolds was responsible for the weekly topical strips in *Funny Folks* from 1878. See D. Gifford, *The British Comic Catalogue 1874 – 1974* (London: Monsell, 1975).

¹³ E. Gosling, ‘Tommy Atkins, Imperial Hero or Domestic Undesirable: The Regular Soldier in Late Victorian Britain’, in *The Arts and Popular Culture in History*, ed. by R. J. Emmett (London: University of Plymouth Press, 2013), p.67.

parade'.¹⁴ The soldier's ability to maintain his kit and uniform and the provision for replacements was a minor, but genuine grievance. Not presented in a recruiting context, *Funny Folks*' interest in the story demonstrates an unusual level of interest in the conditions in the army.

1880 saw the reception of the Airey Committee Report and the commencement of the Childers Reforms. They began a process of deliberation and scheming which shifted the focus once again back onto the larger issues of army organisation and policy and the efficiency of the collective soldiery and away from the soldiers at a more personal level. Articles exploring the character of the soldier and his future were therefore broadly suspended as the technical issues were addressed and the basis upon which the soldier might develop was established. Letters from the wars in Afghanistan and Egypt, reprinted in regional newspapers, maintained some form of presence for soldier and an engagement with the human element of the military.

The subject matter varied from letter to letter, some simply recounting the experiences of the day in the fashion of a diary and others offering commentary on the political motives behind the army's presence in the conflict.¹⁵ Soldiers' letters do not indicate a significant shift in the social status of the soldier and nor do they represent a forceful or prominent presence for the soldier; only a handful of such letters were printed each year

¹⁴ W. Reynolds, 'Reforms in Regimentals' in *Funny Folks*, London (13 November 1880), p. 363.

¹⁵ For example: 'Letter from a Soldier in Cabul' in *The Dundee Courier and Argus* (8 June 1880), issue 8388; 'An Arbroath Soldier in the Afghan War' in *The Dundee Courier and Argus* (16 August 1880), issue 8501; 'A Soldier's Opinion of the Transvaal Peace' in *The Lancaster Gazette* (14 May 1881), issue 5136; 'A Dundee Soldier's Description of the Recent Fighting' in *The Dundee Courier and Argus* (22 October 1882), issue 9106; 'A Manchester Soldier's Story of Tel-El-Kebir' in *The Manchester Times* (14 October 1882), issue 1292; 'A Soldier's Letter from Egypt' in *The Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, (18 October 1882) issue 8636; 'Soldiers' Narratives of the Egyptian Campaign' in *The Aberdeen Weekly Journal* (21 October 1882), issue 7032; 'A York Soldier's Account of Tel-El-Kebir' in *The York Herald* (21 October 1882), issue 9809.

and the practice predates the 1880s. What they do demonstrate is a reception for soldiers' perspectives and an engagement with the soldier which was greater than they had been a decade earlier.

THE SHORT-SERVICE SOLDIER

Perhaps the greatest influence on the discussion of the soldier in the press was the short-service system which by 1879 had had several years to mature and take effect. For the public, the immediately apparent result was the youthfulness of the rank-and-file. Several articles expressed increasing anxiety over whether the nation had lost its best soldiers. The issue had been present since the 1860s and was thrown into focus during the Franco-Prussian War when the Prussians fielded a particularly young army. The ideal army, the *Pall Mall Gazette* announced, was led by educated officers, supported by experienced NCOs with an aptitude for the military profession and boasted a rank-and-file populated by the 'youth of a nation inured from boyhood to hard work and carefully disciplined during their comparatively short service in the ranks'.¹⁶

Where short service drew particular criticism was in its failure to retain the most capable soldiers as NCOs and subsequently in falling short of instilling the strongest military discipline. This coupled with the physical weakness attributed to the low average age and the limited period short-service soldiers spent in the ranks led to the debate highlighted earlier during the examination of the reforms in the press and encouraged an active reappraisal of what constituted the ideal and the realities of the British soldier. One letter to the editor of the *Morning Post* praised the Airey Committee

¹⁶ 'Old and Young Soldiers' in *Pall Mall Gazette* (4 January 1871), issue 1839.

whilst exclaiming the acute dismay at Cardwell's attempt to produce a cheaper and improved soldier:

It is like awakening from a dream. For the last eight years [military men] have been oppressed by the knowledge that short service and premature enlistments have for the time destroyed the physique of the British Army; that the immature boys that compose our rank and file are physically and constitutionally incapable of bearing the privations of war.¹⁷

Short service created greater engagement with the nature of the British soldier and certainly questioned the perception of him of a blackguard. The new alternative was not wholly positive though; an infant in a redcoat encouraged ridicule, not pride.¹⁸

This growing concern over the young short-service soldiers had a particular impact on the image of the soldier. The idea of a youthful army was explored with particular gusto by the periodical cartoons. *Moonshine's* 'Our Infant Army', for instance, drew into question the effectiveness and legitimacy of the new soldiers, presenting them metaphorically as toy soldiers in the hands of the War Office. (See Figure 10) The cartoonist was primarily attacking the Government and demonstrating sympathy for the army; the presence of General Roberts protesting with an almost resigned frustration 'if you want business, give us something better than boy soldiers' illustrates the extent to which the military chiefs were bound by the actions of their political masters.¹⁹ Childers is sat with a childish posture on the floor beneath Roberts, playing with toy soldiers, a significant and instantly recognisable household object by the late-nineteenth century.²⁰ The indictment is directed at the War Office for treating the army as a play-thing to the detriment of its personnel and general efficiency, however, a strong association is

¹⁷ 'An Army in its Teens' in *The Morning Post* (23 May 1879), issue 33355.

¹⁸ See also: 'The State of the Army' in *The Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmoreland and Yorkshire* (24 May 1879), issue 4921; 'The State of Our Army' in *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* (17 July 1879), issue 7746.

¹⁹ Unknown, 'Our Infant Army' in *Moonshine* (26 February 1881), p.97.

²⁰ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.28.

presented between the army and children. Although the military traditionally enjoys an appeal for young boys and men, presented in a political context this connection takes on a mocking tone.

Other cartoons more directly identified the short-service soldiers of 1881 *as* children. J. Gordon Thomson's 'Army Reform', for instance, unequivocally presents the soldier as an infant. It depicts ranks of boys in uniform being inspected by the personification of Britain, [General] John Bull. (See Figure 11) The caption rather sardonically describes the soldiers as 'short-service warriors'.²¹ Bull is clasping the Army Bill, the presence of which, alongside the cartoon's title 'Army Reform', apportions the blame at the door of the War Office, but once again it is the soldier who is the primary subject of the ridicule.

A similar caricature of the child soldier is presented in 'Military Sketch Number 2: A Poser for Childers' in which a group of cherub-faced young soldiers are accosted by a severe man, accompanied by the caption, 'Stranger to Officer in Charge. "I forbid you to march off that army. I am the School Board Inspector"'.²² (See Figure 12) The school board, the cartoon suggests, may have greater authority over the young recruits of the army than the army itself. To an even greater extent than 'Our Infant Army', 'Army Reform' and 'A Poser for Childers' direct overt ridicule at the soldiers themselves. Both cartoons question the manliness of the modern soldier. Whilst the War Office is the

²¹ J. Gordon Thomson, 'Army Reform' in *Fun* (London) (16 March 1881), p.106. Thomson became the political cartoonist for *Fun* in 1870 having worked as a Civil Servant until that time while having his illustrations published periodically in *Punch*, *Boy's Own Magazine* and the *Graphic*. He was in general sympathetic to the Liberal cause and influenced artistically by Tenniel. See Bryant and Heneage, *Dictionary of British Cartoonists*, pp. 222-3 for more information.

²² Unknown, 'Military Sketch No. 2: A Poser for Childers' in *Moonshine* (2 April 1881), p.196.

intended recipient, the impression of the soldier as a literal child in *Fun and Moonshine*, is repeated and confirmed.

To some extent, the reforms under the 1880 Liberal government redirected the social discussion away from the soldier and back onto the political activity taking place though discussion of the soldier continued to take place within the context of specific reforms such as short service and through political and military leaders. Several papers republished an article from *The Naval and Military Gazette* which sought to highlight the complexities of the new system and the notion of an army of weak young soldiers. There was a vast range of physiques in the army, it argued, noting that of the 119,000 foot soldiers of the line, although 18,000 were between 5'5" and 5'6" and 30,000 between 5'6" and 5'7", there were also just a few less than 5000 men at 5'5". Echoing the earlier proprietary relationship between the public and the army, the article was detailed and critical. 5'5", the article noted, was below the regulation standards and although in a minority offset by 25,000 men between 5'8" and 5'10", they still technically were ineligible for service. Standards, it was stated, had slipped.

Remarkably, however, greater colour and context was read into the soldiers' backgrounds. The bearing of the locality of enlistment was considered for instance stating, 'a battalion of Cumberland men would be very different from a battalion of Welsh mountaineers or Glasgow "hoodlums," a battalion from Tipperary not at all like one from Kerry or Connaught'.²³ Though not as a matter routine, the Childers Reforms

²³ 'The Physique of the Army' in *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post* (28 December 1881), issue 10490; 'The Physique of the Army' in *The Leeds Mercury* (28 December 1881), issue 13641; 'The Physique of the Army' in *The Nottinghamshire Guardian* (30 December 1881), issue 1910.

continued to encourage discussion of the transformation of the soldier, in this case beyond the physical, furthering the public's familiarity with the military.

Not infrequently, the pragmatism with which the public viewed the army in the 1870s resurfaced during the reforms of the early 1880s. Further to the fears that short service had furnished the nation with an army of infants, there was also consternation that military service had become too fleeting to be of benefit. 'Military Sketch Number 1: Short Service' illustrates a particularly cynical view expressed among civil and military commentators that the short-service soldier saw the army as an easy option. Bidding his sweetheart farewell the caption reads, '*Recruit Ordered Abroad*. "Don't Cry, Mary. Get killed! - No fear. Afore we land our time will have expired!"'.²⁴ (See Figure 13) The cartoon removes any sense of heroism or sacrifice from the notion of the soldier, as well as highlighting the limited use short-service men were to the army and to Britain if their time expired before they saw any action.

However, as the revisions and additions to the Cardwell Reforms became known and executed, the soldier correspondingly enjoyed a gradual increase in engagement and good press. Optimistic articles praised the efforts of Childers in rescuing the army by making adjustments and introducing schemes which would ease the civilian and military anxiety over issues such as short service and cross posting. Thanks to the reforms, it was announced, 'the military authorities are [now] able to pick their men by enforcing higher conditions as to physique and character; and the *morale* of the army may therefore be expected to show a steady improvement from year to year'.²⁵ This confidence reflected on the soldier for whom, it was hoped, circumstances would

²⁴ Unknown, 'Military Sketch No. 1: Short Service' in *Moonshine* (2 April 1881), p.160.

²⁵ 'The State of the British Army' in *The Western Mail* (17 March 1882), issue 4010.

rapidly improve as recruits were supported by valued older soldiers, served longer and in turn increased the average age in the army.

Illustrating a readiness to perceive the army in a more positive light, *Punch's* 'Short Service and Quick Returns' by the influential cartoonist John Tenniel presents a rather more sanguine interpretation of the short-service system. (See Figure 14) The cartoon depicts 'Field-Marshal Punch' welcoming home soldiers from Africa. In contrast to the *Moonshine* cartoon, Tenniel indicates that the quality of the manpower now populating the ranks had enabled them to fulfil their duty in the time available, rather than to avoid it. The play on 'quicker returns', indicates that short-service soldiers are both quick to return from foreign service but also are a quick return on the nation's investment in them. The caption praises the soldiers, suggesting they have disproved their former critics, 'you've shown what sort of stuff you're made of, and we're proud of you'.²⁶

This optimism was also bolstered by the British Army's victories in Egypt where high profile political and military leaders such as General Wolseley praised the conduct of their young soldiers. The press echoed their sentiments as they, 'put upon record the superior qualities of the British soldier'.²⁷ In light of the reports from Tel el Kebir, the *Hampshire Advertiser* assuredly announced that, 'despite all misgivings as to the bravery and endurance of the young troops...they have behaved in a manner which

²⁶ J. Tenniel, 'Short Service and Quick Returns' in *Punch* (21 October 1882), p.186. John Tenniel illustrated for *Punch* for fifty years. Like *Punch* itself, he set the standard for the political cartoonists of the second half of the nineteenth century. Tenniel replaced John Leech as *Punch's* chief cartoonist in 1864 having worked first as the illustrator for poems and humorous initials and then as *Punch's* political cartoonist. Renowned for creating the 'official' manner of political cartooning, Tenniel was responsible for establishing the British Lion, John Bull and Britannia as the received imagery for Englishmen and Britain. Initially fairly right-wing partisan, Tenniel adopted a more impartial and fair-minded stance as his career progressed. For more information see Bryant and Heneage, *Dictionary of British Cartoonists*, pp. 215-6.

²⁷ 'The Superior Qualities of the British Soldier' in *The Hampshire Advertiser* (11 October 1882), issue 3790.

nobly sustains the reputation of the flag under which they fought'.²⁸ Inevitably, Egypt also gave rise to caution and scepticism with articles such as 'Our Old Soldiers and New' highlighting the relative ease with which the army overcame the Egyptians and how tougher foes would be required, the likes of whom had tested the old soldiers' mettle, if the new, young soldier was to be accepted.²⁹ Attitudes had not been transformed but shifted a degree further towards the social acceptance of Tommy Atkins, despite his youth.

Where there were global and imperial tensions, shifts in the British public's valuation of the soldier are identifiable. The jingoistic sentiments of popular imperialist culture, such as in the music halls, occasionally surfaced in the press. This was again most identifiable in the periodical cartoon. For example, the mid-1880s saw renewed consternation over Russian expansionism in the near and Middle East and the potential threat to British interests in India.

In *Judy's* 'Tommy Atkins to the Front', the soldier is appropriated as the symbol for, and guardian of, British values in opposition to the Russian menace.³⁰ (See Figure 15) The illustration is peppered with iconography associated with British qualities. The soldier appears as a popular children's figurine, the toy soldier. Countering the perception in the mid-1880s of the soldier as an individual separate from the domestic society, tied to life in barracks and following their regiment's movements across the empire, the cartoon presents him as a household object. Moreover, though modern mass-produced toy soldiers were metal, the 'toy' soldier is represented as a wooden

²⁸ 'The Superior Qualities of the British Soldier' in *The Hampshire Advertiser* (11 October 1882), issue 3790.

²⁹ 'Old Soldiers and New' in *The Western Mail* (4 November 1882), issue 4208.

³⁰ Anon., 'Tommy Atkins to the Front' in *Judy* (25 March 1885), p.142.

figure with his heart described as being made of oak, a quintessentially English material: reliable, durable and solid. These qualities are conspicuously attributed to Tommy Atkins by association.³¹ This was a distinct shift from the 1880 'Our Infant Army', in which the toy soldier had held the negative connotations of frivolity and ineffectiveness.

A poem accompanies the cartoon elucidating the crude symbolism of the illustration. The contradiction between general attitudes towards the soldier and perceptions of him in scenarios of public paranoia and fear is defined with exceptional clarity. The poem identifies the soldier as 'but a plaything' who 'fights for a scanty wage', reflecting the War Office's perpetual struggle to recruit in light of uncompetitive pay and conditions. Intriguingly, references to such negative aspects of the soldier's career, and the soldier's tolerance of them, are presented as positive elements of his character. Enduring his unenviable lot, the poem suggests, renders the soldier 'tougher than lead' and solid in his service of Queen and country.³²

Anxiety over short-service soldiers, which had begun to ease by the mid-to-late-1880s, had all but ceased by 1890. The reforms of Cardwell and Childers were becoming an increasingly distant memory and the army's ability to produce soldiers in sufficient numbers and to a suitable standard was no longer a pressing public concern. Articles seeking to cast scrutiny and doubt over the new 'young' soldier dwindled and the papers no longer questioned what constituted a British Tommy.

³¹ E. Gosling, 'Tommy Atkins: Imperial Hero or Domestic Undesirable', p.62

³² E. Gosling, 'Tommy Atkins: Imperial Hero or Domestic Undesirable', p.68

'THE SOLDIER' OF THE 1890S

The presence of the British soldier in the press has particular application in nuancing the realities of the soldier's social position and the public's engagement with the military. Several historians have identified what David French has termed the 'paradoxical position' of the British Army, and, as French himself acknowledges the, 'public persona of the soldier in the abstract', was redefined during the late-nineteenth century.³³ Whilst the cultural and social manifestations of the soldier's contradictory status have been identified, the elements which enabled their development have not been fully defined. What the nineteenth-century press offers is an insight, albeit broad and imprecise, into the various public attitudes and perceptions which helped to create it.

The soldier of the 1860s, 1870s and the majority of the 1880s, was as Chapter 4 has demonstrated, limited in the direct public attention he received. The British people valued their military but did not consider it to be deserving of attention and support beyond that which affected its efficiency and imperial role. For the most part, this did not change. The welfare and position of the soldier never became a cause for public concern. This lack of public engagement ensured that the social status of the soldier could only progress so far. Where the transition may be seen is not in terms of public concern for the soldier in general but in a public appetite for information on the army and on the soldier.

1890 stands as a pivot in the revision of public attitudes. The sporadic anxiety expressed during the 1870s and 1880s following the Cardwell-Childers Reforms, and short service in particular, no longer encouraged debate over the loss of the old and state of the new

³³ French, *Military Identities*, pp.232–233.

soldier. Following this short period of neutrality, when the soldier received neither scrutiny nor praise, the complexion of the public's engagement changed considerably. 'Tommy Atkins' came to prominence with numerous articles presenting the soldier under this moniker, accompanied by a dramatic transformation in the nature and tone of the military media presence.

Public interest had shifted to enthusiastically encompass the life and existence of the soldier. Earlier attempts during the 1870s and 1880s to engage with his identity and persona stemmed from a distinctly political angle. They sought to ascertain how best the soldier might be improved and employed and how the quickening pace of military development and organisation might affect his substance and form. However, the press of the mid-1890s conveyed a greater cultural interest in Tommy Atkins and the life and existence of the soldier.

This interest took several forms in the press in addition to an abundant use of the term 'Tommy Atkins'. Of particular popularity was the inclusion, by way of serials or one-off articles, of accounts of army life by serving soldiers. A series entitled 'Trooper Tommy Atkins' in the *Penny Illustrated Paper* [PIP] was by far the most prevalent. Running from the 5th January 1895 and continuing for twenty-six weekly instalments, the series was written and illustrated by two soldiers who had 'been through the mill'.³⁴ It presented a detailed account of early life with the Hussars ranging from the experiences of enlistment through to training and barrack life. This series was immediately followed by, 'Trooper Tommy Atkins's "First War", or Tommy Atkins on Active Service', which assumed the same style and pace, offering detailed insights into

³⁴ 'Trooper Tommy Atkins' I – XXVII in *Penny Illustrated Paper* (5 January 1895–6 July 1895), issue NA.

the personal experiences of a young soldier abroad.³⁵ The latter series had a similar duration, concluding in the December of that year with similar features promised for the future. Indicating the popularity of the series, *PIP* also advertised the back-catalogue of issues which contained chapters of ‘Trooper Tommy Atkins’ and announced the inclusion of the series as ‘War Stories’ in the *PIP* Christmas annual.³⁶

The success of *PIP*'s series attracted attention from its competitors. Accounts of army life had a wide appeal, as the authors of the military memoirs examined in chapters 8 and 9 often acknowledged in their prefaces. Various newspapers included one-off extracts and exclusives. In some cases an article was inspired by an event, such as the fourth Ashanti War which began in 1895. The following December *The Graphic* published a piece by a serving infantry NCO.³⁷ ‘A Day in the Life of Tommy Atkins’ methodically walked the reader through a typical day in an Infantry barracks, in a deliberate attempt by the author to inform the public in the soldier’s routine at home. Interest in the army was such, he argued - and the Ashanti War had encouraged such interest - that civilians were now open to information on what life in the army meant but did not gain the most accurate idea of domestic service from imperial tales. The NCO’s article confirms the increased interest amongst civilians in the military existence and furthermore, highlights the genuine appetite within the public for information on life in the army, which was not simply to ascertain whether it was meeting the nation’s standards.

³⁵ ‘Trooper Tommy’s “First War” or Tommy Atkins on Active Service’ I – XXIII in *Penny Illustrated Paper* (13 July 1895–14 December 1895), issue NA.

³⁶ ‘Trooper Tommy’s “First War” XXIII’ in *Penny Illustrated Paper* (14 December 1895), issue 1803.

³⁷ ‘A Day in the Life of Tommy Atkins’ in *The Graphic* (21 December 1895), issue 1360.

Several other articles demonstrated this increased interest in the more human aspect of the army, illustrating the disconnection between the official and possessive interest of the 1860s and 1870s with the new fascination with the ordinary soldier. Continuing with the success of ‘Trooper Tommy’, *PIP* printed an illustration of ‘Tommy Atkins at Rest and Play’, depicting the various means by which soldiers relaxed.³⁸ In comparison to the soldier’s presence in the press even as recently as 1890, there was a considerable difference in tone and focus. Tales of desertion and far-fetched escapades also became a source of amusement. Archibald Chasemore’s ‘The Soldier Who Took a Run’, in *Judy*, December 1893, offered a humorous interpretation of a story about a deserter who had given the excuse that he had started running to keep warm.³⁹ (See Figure 16) The cartoon reflects the shift in attitudes towards the military; there is an interest in the soldier specifically and in his backstory; there is humour derived from the act of desertion where there once would more likely have been consternation; and what criticism is made of the army is directed more at the aging generals rather than the rank-and-file.

The soldier of the mid-to-late-1890s was at the forefront of the military’s public presence. Increasingly items of ‘news’ concerned with matters of military organisation such as the Army Estimates, which for decades had annually been published without a single allusion toward the soldier as anything other than a statistic, made reference to them.⁴⁰ In the public mind the soldier *was* the army. This newfound acceptance extended beyond the cultural appeal and political awareness which fostered it. Socially, the soldier was taking on a new significance. The army undoubtedly played its part; the

³⁸ ‘Tommy Atkins’s Aldershot Amusements’ in *Penny Illustrated Paper* (27 July 1895), issue 1783.

³⁹ A. Chasemore, ‘The Soldier Who Took a Run’ in *Judy* (6 December 1893), p.276. Chasemore began his career as a humorous artist for *Punch* in 1867. He became a mainstay of *Judy*, illustrating for the publication for more than thirty years. He usually specialised in theatrical subjects. See Bryant and Heneage, *Dictionary of British Cartoonists*, p.4.

⁴⁰ ‘Oh, Tommy Tommy Atkins’ in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (16 March 1895), issue 9353.

Cardwell-Childers Reforms were supported by progressive officers such as Lord Wolseley highlighting the confidence they held in the rank-and-file and the standards they now met. Referring to the soldier of the Napoleonic Wars in comparison to the soldier of the present (1895) the C-in-C emphasised that improvements which had taken place:

The Private soldier was treated as an unreasoning being and his social benefit was very little considered. Those days have happily gone by and we now tried to elevate our soldiers by treating them as persons whose wishes ought to be consulted. The rank and file of the army [are] the most sober classes in England, and there [is] less crime in the army than in any corresponding class.⁴¹

The regard and consideration Wolseley referred to in respect of the soldier suggested to the public that socially he was of increasing value and that this was something the military high command recognised. If the officer corps no longer regarded the rank-and-file in a socially negative light, why should the public?

The appeal of military tradition and discipline began to encourage further public engagement with the soldier as an individual and as a member of society. Growing esteem for the soldier was symptomatic of a wider sense of social discomfort and unease with regards to the nation's youth and the future of the country.⁴² With insistence from the army and the War Office that the contemporary soldier was as fine as any of his peers and with the growing cultural fascination with military life and the qualities that military service imbued, Tommy Atkins was rapidly becoming an example to behold. *The Manchester Times* had reproduced an article from the *United Service Magazine* in the January of 1895 which stressed such a perspective, arguing that:

⁴¹ 'Lord Wolseley on the British Soldier' in *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* (20 December 1895), issue NA.

⁴² J. Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p.194.

In the midst of a rebellious and froward generation – an anarchical and socialist generation – we turn with relief, as we may have to turn for protection, to a body of men with whom the old order changeth not; for whom the old watchwords have the old signification; who though they talk not (far from it!) in the fine language of chivalry, have the spirit of it in glorious deeds; for whom “the Queen” still stands as the abiding symbol of Authority – who will die for a sacred Rag.⁴³

The article argued that the British Army instilled in its servicemen an array of desirable qualities, rendering the regiment a family and a source of direction greater than that which the civilian would receive in his daily life. In the army, the article professed, one received discipline and governance as well as being imbued with comradeship, mutual respect, mutual help and self-help, whilst also creating a state of ‘purified socialism’ combined with a ‘glorified feudalism’ in which the ‘serf becomes the servant proud of the Service, while the Service is just as proud of him’.⁴⁴

A particularly succinct illustration of this shift in the soldier as a paragon of British virtues and tradition in light of youthful rebellion appeared in *Chatterbox* in October 1890. (See Figures 17 and 18) Two young boys dressed as a drummer and a sailor embrace before a Union Flag.⁴⁵ The illustration is accompanied by a poem extolling the virtues of England’s sailors and soldiers;

England’s soldiers who so bold?
Could all their glorious deeds be told,
The bare recital well might move
To kindred deeds the coldest heart;
Might cause the meanest soul to love,
And chose to play a noble part,
Might teach all men, and women too,

⁴³ ‘Tommy Atkins off Duty’ in *The Manchester Times* (18 January 1895), issue NA.

⁴⁴ ‘Tommy Atkins off Duty’ in *The Manchester Times* (18 January 1895), issue NA.

⁴⁵ F.R., ‘England’s Defenders: The Army and the Navy’ (illustration) in *Chatterbox* (11 October 1890), p.377.

When duty calls, 'The task to do'.⁴⁶

This social pride, whilst not profuse, was present in a manner which had not been apparent before. News of soldiers receiving civil medals appeared more frequently and reports such as that of Private W. J. Anthony being awarded the Royal Humane Society's bronze medal for rescuing a drowned man further raised the soldier's profile.⁴⁷ Heroism and the soldier were rapidly becoming synonymous by the closure of the 1890s. 'Tommy Atkins' was still enjoying the cultural interest acquired by the middle of the decade, but added to it were social values, expressed in the emotive adjectives, 'heroic', 'brave', and 'gallant'. Acts of gallantry were afforded wide coverage.

In January 1899 the story of a young artilleryman who had rescued a family from an industrial accident in Clerkenwell hit several newspapers. Despite the rescue also involving the aid of a civilian, it was the actions of Gunner William Hall which prompted headlines including, 'Gallant Soldier Saves Four from Death Through Vitriol Fumes', 'A Soldier's Heroism: Rescue of a Family of Four in Clerkenwell', and, 'Magnificent Heroism of a Soldier: Brave Rescue amid the Deadly Fumes of Vitriol'.⁴⁸ The story was seized upon with enthusiasm and gusto. The *Derby Mercury* recited his last words to a 'mate' before diving into the fume-filled building, 'I'm going through it, Jack, whether I come back or not; so goodbye in case', completing the heroic deed.⁴⁹ This eagerness to equate the soldier with gallantry and heroism increasingly defined the

⁴⁶ B.M., 'England's Defenders: The Army and the Navy' (poem) in *Chatterbox* (11 October 1890), p.377.

⁴⁷ 'Our Army' in *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (17 February 1895), issue 2726.

⁴⁸ 'A Gallant Soldier' in *Reynolds's Newspaper* (1 January 1899), issue 2525; 'A Soldier's Heroism' in *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (1 January 1899), issue 2928; 'Magnificent Heroism of a Soldier' in *The Illustrated Police News etc.* (7 January 1899), issue 1821.

⁴⁹ 'A Soldier's Heroic Deed' in *The Derby Mercury* (4th January 1899), issue 9599.

public perception of the soldier. Such rescue stories were not common, but appeared prominently in the press where they had not, a decade before.

Heroic deeds by soldiers at home were only part of the growing cultural veneration of Tommy Atkins. The public's appetite for insights into military life had lessened since the middle of the decade but the later-1890s still saw some interest in the experiences of the soldier. More importantly, the accounts of such experiences were becoming steeped in the emotive language of heroism. Reminiscences of veterans and current servicemen were received in the same manner and a growing sensitivity to the value of the soldier developed. This association between the soldier, heroism and the corresponding public appetite for a military yarn is increasingly identifiable, even to the extent that soldiers were used to endorse products, such as pharmaceuticals and remedies.

'The Brave Soldier', for instance, appeared in the *Weekly Standard and Express*. It featured a veteran's testimonial for 'Dodd's Kidney Pills' having cured the rheumatism he had developed on active service.⁵⁰ 'A Hero's Life of Adventure' also appeared in several publications in 1899 in which a veteran described the highs and lows of his military career only to conclude by describing his ill health after contracting influenza and then endorsing another elixir, 'Dr Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People'.⁵¹ So elaborate were some advertisements, they were often several sentences or even paragraphs long and made no mention of their endorsements until the final line. The soldier's recommendation is vital in the advert's appeal. Military men were not the sole

⁵⁰ 'A Brave Soldier' in *The Weekly Standard and Express* (Blackburn) 25 February 1899), issue 2388.

⁵¹ 'Hero's Life of Adventure' in *The Royal Cornwall Gazette* (16 March 1899), issue 4990; 'Hero's Life of Adventure: A Chat with an Old Soldier' in *The Yorkshire Herald and the York Herald* (18 March 1899), issue 14907; 'Hero's Life of Adventure' in *The Hampshire Advertiser*, Southampton (18 March 1899), issue 5506; 'Hero's Life of Adventure' in *The Cheshire Observer* (25 March 1899), issue 2433.

endorsers of these products, but their presence indicates a level of trustworthiness and cultural value which the word of the soldier did not have a decade earlier.

Further to this peculiar example of small-scale exploitation, an examination of the press reveals a rather more genuine, delicate and direct social appreciation of the soldier. As the Under-Secretary of State for War George Wyndham had professed, there was a rapidly growing acceptance that some social rehabilitation of the soldier had taken place in recent years and that the emphasis was on the public to take stock and adjust its attitudes accordingly. The *Yorkshire Herald and York Herald* questioned whether the average civilian ever paused to consider the level of debt he owed the soldier for 'he would find that the bill was a fairly formidable one'.⁵² The article proceeded to argue that it sincerely hoped that the public was beginning to awaken to such a debt, noting that the soldier was once ostracised from respectable society due to a 'bad odour' largely of his own making but that in recent years that 'odour' had been evaporating.

The article highlighted the sacrifice made by soldiers by serving abroad in unhealthy climates. Here again, the value of the soldier was being directly identified. The improvement in the quality of men attracted was noted and a positive shift in the public perception of the young men enlisting is evident. The article concluded by stressing the fact that the volunteer freed the civilian from the risk of being compelled to serve. 'It saves our country from the conscription, and the gratitude we owe the soldier cannot be

⁵² 'The Week: The British Army' in *The Yorkshire Herald and the York Herald* (23 September 1899), issue 15069.

repaid by mere words. We should show by our acts that we are anxious to liquidate the debt.’⁵³

This is not to suggest that the soldier was no longer subject to criticism or that the rank-and-file were not derided by many during the 1890s. The satirical periodicals continued to target the army and the soldier, with even accolades of military heroism being open to, albeit mild, derision. T. E. Donnison’s ‘Portrait of a Military Hero’ for instance, highlights with effective simplicity the results of over-indulgence on the celebrated war hero with the slender figure of the ‘before’ portrait starkly contrasting the bloated man pictured in ‘after’.⁵⁴ (See Figure 19)

Even attempts to defend the soldier were capable of encouraging unkind sentiments, as the *Liverpool Mercury* inadvertently managed through its well-meaning but tactless appeal for civilian-military relations of a continental standard. Criticising the British treatment of the soldier in comparison to attitudes on the continent the paper rather compounded many negative perceptions by conceding that, ‘the English army must be made desirable to a better class of toiler before much can be done...to remedy this’.⁵⁵ A greater appreciation of the soldier did not necessarily equate to a revision of the social and class estimations by which he was traditionally held; the public would always desire something better.

⁵³ ‘The Week: The British Army’ in *The Yorkshire Herald and the York Herald* (23 September 1899), issue 15069.

⁵⁴ T. E. Donnison, ‘Portrait of a Military Hero’ in *Fun* (22 November 1898), p.164. The Irish cartoonist Donnison’s illustrations began to appear in periodicals in the mid-1890s. He illustrated for *Fun* and *Moonshine*.

⁵⁵ ‘Tommy Atkins and the Continental Soldier’ in the *Liverpool Mercury* (19 September 1899), issue 16139.

The soldier of 1899 was not totally transformed. Culturally, Tommy Atkins held greater currency than his predecessors and the low-level interest in the army which had traditionally characterised the limited civilian association with the soldier had assumed a more public presence. Through the local and London press it is possible to trace its growth into an identifiable cultural shift. Socially however, there remained a gulf between the aspirations of the military reformers for socio-military cohesion and the realities of the position the soldier occupied in British domestic discourse. Culturally, there was a perception of increased optimism in the nation's military which was reflected in the realms of imperialist culture. In reality, there remained a large section of society yet to be convinced of the soldier's social rehabilitation. The question of the soldiers' social status and public prejudice against the uniform is one which had in itself a complex course and progression in the final decades of the nineteenth century, the transition of which is evidenced in the local and London press.

THE SOLDIER, SOCIAL STATUS AND PUBLIC PREJUDICE

In line with the increased public presence of the soldier, there emerged greater demand for the civilian world to reconsider and address the poor social status of the soldier. This issue had arisen on occasion in the 1870s and 1880s, although in the early years it affirmed the public aversion to soldiers as often as it decried it. In January of 1873 the *Huddersfield Daily Chronical* published an article which noted how the government's plans to make Nottingham a military centre under localisation had caused 'much dissatisfaction in that town'. The article cited as the reasons for this opposition: the soldiers' immunity from paying civil debts; their tendency to produce illegitimate offspring and avoid contributing subsequent support; their willingness to throw their families on the care of the parish since less than ten per cent were officially permitted to

marry; and the effect barracks had on the 'scenes at night'.⁵⁶ Despite the efforts of the War Office to more closely integrate the regiment, the immediate reaction in places such as Nottingham was to balk at the social implications a concentration of soldiers might have.

By 1879 however, the progress achieved in encouraging a revision of the attitudes expressed by certain sections in society was evident. A series of articles highlighted the issue of the soldier's social status, which was at that time being raised in parliament by Colonel Stanley. The *Dundee Courier and Argus* emphasised the injustice dealt to soldiers:

There seems no very good reason why honourable members of either services should be refused admission to theatres and other places of amusement, even when accompanied by friends not in uniform... It is a still greater grievance when the gallant defenders of our hearths have not been allowed to travel in steam boats and other public conveyances for no other reason, as is alleged, than that they wear Her Majesty's uniform.⁵⁷

The article announced that such exclusion of soldiers was an outdated attitude which was increasingly unacceptable in British society. Moreover, it promised that such incidents would be addressed through the imposition of official sanctions upon proprietors, a recourse previously unavailable to soldiers. It credited the Cardwell Reforms with the improvement of the soldier, pointing out that,

The feeling of aversion...doubtless originated at a time when the ranks of the army were recruited from the very lowest classes of society, and consequently were composed of the scum of the population. Of late years however, everyone knows that a great change has taken place in this respect.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ 'Nottingham Opinion of the Army' in *The Huddersfield Daily Chronical* (8 January 1873), issue 1691.

⁵⁷ 'The Social Status of the Soldier' in the *Dundee Courier and Argus* (21 June 1879), issue 8087.

⁵⁸ 'The Social Status of the Soldier' in the *Dundee Courier and Argus* (21 June 1879), issue 8087.

The same publication followed the article up in November 1880 announcing that soldiers in Edinburgh were also experiencing discrimination in places of public resort but also that the Crystal Palace Company had offered half price entrance to soldiers in uniform on shilling days. This combined act of denouncing discrimination and praising the Crystal Palace Company reflects a growing rejection of public intolerance of uniformed soldiers.⁵⁹

Support for soldiers prior to the 1890s was not driven purely by War Office, and specific events prompted further calls for social integration. Following the war in Egypt for example, which encouraged a spike in public support for the army, there were calls for the recent successes to stimulate closer relations between soldiers and civilians. One article in Cardiff's *Western Mail* pressed home this optimism:

We shall certainly not grudge the enthusiasm we have expended on our army if it only prove the means of breaking down the barrier that has in the past separated the soldier from the civilian, and made them, as it were, two distinct, almost hostile, parties.⁶⁰

The article deemed the 'social ban' on the soldier as no longer appropriate; the modern soldier spent his time in training and education, not drill, guard duty and depravity. Interaction and coexistence between soldiers and the public was already greater than previously and on this basis, and in light of the recent jubilant reception given to returning troops, it was time to end discrimination. 'Our Soldiers' confidently asserted that the soldier of 1882 was equal to his civilian peers and that whilst social exclusion in the past had been blameable upon the behaviour and outlook of the soldier, the fault now lay increasingly with the ignorance of the civilian.

⁵⁹ 'The Treatment of Soldiers in Uniform' in the *Dundee Courier and Argus* (30 November 1880), issue 3589.

⁶⁰ 'Our Soldiers' in *The Western Mail* (1 December 1882), issue 2431.

The *Western Mail's* article constituted part of an extended campaign which in May of that year had been spurred on by a letter written to the editor of *The Standard*. The author described his humiliation and horror when he and a friend in uniform were refused access to a hotel restaurant.⁶¹ Instances of individuals speaking out against discrimination against soldiers were increasing by the mid-1880s and such instances attracted a level of attention. The *Western Mail* made reference to *The Standard's* letter, announcing, 'such conduct as that of the hotel keeper should no longer be tolerated', though acknowledging that improvement, 'would be, and must be, slow and gradual'.⁶² Another civilian 'friend of the soldier', this time to the editor of *Freeman's Journal*, delivered a lengthy and impassioned appeal to the people of Ireland to build bonds and bridges between their communities and the soldiers stationed with them. The poverty and desperation suffered by the inhabitants of that country were not dissimilar to, nor the fault of the soldiers, the letter argued, and the rich and powerful who had failed the Irish communities had failed the soldier also.⁶³

These appeals for greater understanding were not common nor widespread but indicate a growing awareness and concern and preparedness to speak out. The contrast between the treatment of troops returning from war and of individual soldiers in public caused alarm and the reassurances of the War Office that the army was attracting a better class of man further discredited negative preconceptions. In some instances, unfriendly attitudes towards soldiers were highlighted gently, particularly towards the close of the 1880s, as prejudice against the soldier began to provoke opposition. 'Army

⁶¹ 'Soldiers in Uniform' in *The Standard* (25 April 1882), issue 18024.

⁶² 'Soldiers in Uniform' in *The Western Mail* (1 May 1882). issue 4047.

⁶³ 'The Army and the People' in *Freeman's Journal and the Daily Commercial Advertiser* (18 January 1882), issue N/A.

Retrenchment' underlined the cold reception even soldiers with families might receive in public and the extent to which civilians continued to express a level of personal ownership over individual soldiers. (See Figure 20) Depicting a married sapper pushing a pram down the street with his wife and children, the cartoon caption reveals that a passing brewer is exclaiming in 'indignant tones', 'I say, Sapper, is that what I pay you for?'.⁶⁴ *Moonshine* draws attention to the uncharitable and proprietary manner with which some sections of society saw the financial maintenance of the army and the subservience under which they placed the soldier as a result.

By the 1890s there were frequent expressions of support for the soldier in the local and London press. Despite the optimism and the efforts of the War Office and proponents of the soldiers' social wellbeing in the late-1870s and early-1880s, the same issues continued to arise. This resulted in the public defence of soldiers by high profile politicians and senior army officers. In 1890 Lord Randolph Churchill challenged the Secretary of State for War Edward Stanhope over reports of soldiers continuing to be denied entry to public venues. Citing the erstwhile degradation of actors as a socially undesirable group, the article argued that prejudices against uniformed soldiers was equally outdated:

The non-commissioned officers of the British Army are the very backbone of the service, and their record...is surprisingly good. No one is likely to grumble if the result of Lord Randolph's question in parliament is to give them the civil public recognition which they are as much entitled to as any other of the Queen's subjects.⁶⁵

In response to their article, Major-General Dashwood wrote to the *Morning Post's* editor praising soldiers and dismissing prejudice against them stating that, 'As a fact all

⁶⁴ Unknown, 'Army Retrenchment' in *Moonshine* (7 July 1888), p. 11.

⁶⁵ 'Lord Randolph Churchill's action with regard to the treatment of soldiers in uniform...' in *Morning Post* (28 February 1890), issue 36725.

men are improved by [sic] army: they learn habits of cleanliness, order, punctuality and their manners and address are generally much improved'.⁶⁶ Lord Randolph Churchill's and the *Morning Post's* interest in the treatment of soldiers in public was taken up by regional publications. The *Yorkshire Herald* condoned Churchill's efforts, condemning both entertainment-house proprietors and the public more generally for their outdated attitudes and reiterating the worthiness of the modern Tommy Atkins:

It is fully time that a distinction which is not only offensive but ridiculous should be abolished, as it easily can be by the influence of a rational public opinion. A soldier who does not behave himself in a public place can always be removed as any civilian might be, so that it is absurd to insist on any *prima facie* objection to his presence. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he will be found to possess qualities which, as crowds are reckoned up, may be considered ideal. He is smart and clean, sober, respectful and too well disciplined to favour any attempts at "rowdyism".⁶⁷

As the call for the social integration of soldiers increased, so did the vehemence with which uncharitable attitudes from members of the public were opposed. By 1890 the expectation had shifted to suggest that rather than the public needing to be informed of the soldier's improved state, the fact should have become common knowledge and discrimination on the basis of the rough character of the soldier was no longer acceptable.

Despite this top-down attempt to address the issue, support for the soldier in public from 1890 onwards was not universal or unconditional. The message was that soldiers were no more or less likely than a civilian to cause trouble in public and could be dealt with in much the same manner. In smaller communities however, tensions still existed and suspicions continued to colour the civil-military relationship. In Guildford for example,

⁶⁶ "Soldiers in Uniform" in *The Morning Post* (1 March 1890), issue 36736.

⁶⁷ "Tommy Atkins in the Boxes" in *The Yorkshire Herald and the York Herald* (1 March 1890), issue 12089.

concerns over drunken soldiers in the area led to suggestions of an informal curfew, with claims that it was ‘absolutely dangerous for any woman, and nearly so for any man, to be out in the district after half-past nine o’clock in the evening’.⁶⁸

There was a key difference, however, in the manner in which the tensions between civilian and military populations were reported. In earlier years, the soldier in civil disturbances was almost automatically identified as the agitator. Increasingly it was acknowledged that the local civilian populace could be equally aggressive and that disagreements could originate from their camp rather than the military’s. Disturbances in Tenby and Bury St Edmonds were reported with both the soldiers and civilians involved being condemned and even a suggestion of provocation by the civilian population.⁶⁹ Such examples do not constitute a wholesale reversal of public attitudes towards the army but do indicate a willingness to consider soldiers as men and not to make assumptions about their conduct.

Despite the growing aversion to acts of discrimination against soldiers expressed in the press, by the middle of the 1890s the issue was still present and attracting criticism, especially in garrison towns. The nature of the argument shifted again, and whilst the practice of barring men in uniform from certain establishments still occurred occasionally, the press was far less sympathetic to the concerns of the proprietor and the civilian population. Whereas the earlier protests of the 1880s and even early 1890s had acknowledged that decades of prejudicial treatment against soldiers and the gradual

⁶⁸ ‘Soldiers a Danger to Public Peace’ in *The North Eastern Daily Gazette* (8 September 1890), issue N/A.

⁶⁹ ‘Conflict between Soldiers and Civilians’ in *The Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmoreland and Yorkshire* (18 June 1890), issue 6087.

improvement in the calibre of men enlisting meant that attitudes would take time to shift, this leniency was no longer apparent.

This heightened intolerance reflected the attitudes of the military authorities which had since adopted a policy of boycotting an establishment if the proprietor imposed restrictions on uniformed men, a move encouraged by the Wantage Committee report in 1891-2. The *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* announced a military boycott of a hotel in Dover following its refusal to allow soldiers, and specifically men at or below the rank of corporal to use the billiards room.⁷⁰ Six months later, another hotel in Portsmouth was designated 'out of bounds' by the government in response to the establishment's ruling that certain bars be closed to soldiers.⁷¹ The army demonstrated a greater willingness to react to prejudicial treatment of its soldiers, despite remaining within the code of anonymity to which it was bound (banned hotels and taverns were not named by the authorities in the press), raising the issue in parliament and at local magistrates.⁷² And the soldiers themselves, to which Section III's exploration of the military perspective will attest, were increasingly willing to follow suit and protest.

The military was not alone in pressing its objection to continuing public discrimination. Public indignation expressed in print media continued to draw interest and support. Following the boycott of an unnamed hotel in Portsmouth, the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* published a lengthy article attacking the public for its treatment of soldiers. 'Does an Englishman forfeit the right to the respect of his fellow-countrymen when he dons the Queen's uniform', it asked, adding that, 'the mere fact that such a question is

⁷⁰ 'Soldiers and Places of Public Resort: A Military Boycott' in *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* (8 January 1895), issue 12601.

⁷¹ 'The Soldier's Status' in *The Morning Post* (10 August 1895), issue 38430.

⁷² 'The Queen's Uniform' in *The Hampshire Advertiser* (24 August 1895), issue 5134.

necessary is a disgrace to us a nation who brag and boast of the conquests “we” have won, and of the battles fought for us while we have been sleeping in our beds’.⁷³ The *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* proceeded to highlight the hypocrisy of some publicans, particularly in London and Portsmouth, who praised the soldier during war and shunned him during peace. It also drew attention to the respect shown to officers suggesting that the common soldier should expect the same, in particular the NCO whose middle-class tastes should admit him to that social strata. By way of a final strike, or perhaps act of persuasion, it concluded, ‘With educated people this is already understood, but there are still far too many who require education on the subject’.⁷⁴

By the close of the nineteenth century, some public discrimination against soldiers remained. However, the intolerance of such treatment by the military authorities and soldiers had continued and grown in militancy. The policy of boycotting establishments accused of denying uniformed men access persisted but the army displayed far less discretion than in previous years, allowing perpetrators to be named and shamed in the local and London papers.⁷⁵ Opponents of the social mistreatment of the soldier were, by 1899, comfortably vocal and forceful in their response. Tensions between the public and the soldier, while not ceased entirely, had eased considerably and conflict was infrequent.

This improvement in civilian-military relations is attributable to a number of factors. The increased support offered to soldiers from the military authorities and sympathetic civilians, the likes of which was expressed in the press certainly aided in encouraging a

⁷³ ‘A Soldier’s Rights’ in *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* (15 August 1895), issue 12758.

⁷⁴ ‘A Soldier’s Rights’ in *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* (15 August 1895), issue 12758.

⁷⁵ ‘Refusal to Serve Soldiers’ in *The Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronical etc.* (19 August 1899), issue 4622.

revision of attitudes and an adjustment in the perceived appropriateness in singling out soldiers for abuse. How far this good will was intended for the soldier specifically is unclear; the more forceful garnering of support came when the Queen's uniform was held up as the object of discrimination. The extent to which the man behind the uniform was of consequence is unclear. Symbolically however, the rejection of the mistreatment of the uniform extended to dismiss the mistreatment of the ordinary soldier and in particular the NCO. Undoubtedly, a major part of the transition in attitudes came with the increased willingness in the 1890s to see the soldier as a man.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has illustrated how, over thirty years, the social and cultural presence of the soldier in Britain underwent a major transformation by presenting the changing sentiments, concerns and interests of the public as they were conveyed in the British press over the period. During the late-1860s and the 1870s, the public perception of the military was grounded in the idea of the institution. Whilst references to the military are frequent, their focus is on the army, not the soldier. The announcements of the Army Estimates and other specialised matters relating to the military highlight how aloof and pragmatic the public engagement with the army was at that stage.

It was in a cultural sense that the press indicates the greatest shift in the position and development of the soldier in late-Victorian society. The impact of war certainly assisted in encouraging the perception of the soldier in light of his heroism or sacrifice. The conflicts in Egypt and the Sudan in the early-to-mid 1880s in particular painted the soldier in a new setting which demanded greater respect from the civilian upon whose behalf the conflict was fought. However, it was not until the late-1880s and the 1890s

that the life and experiences of the soldier began to gain cultural value. Partly as a result of the growth in popularity of juvenile and imperial adventure literature, the soldier began to exert a fascination over the civilian public.

This transformation is significant since it highlights the movement of the soldier into the public's perception of the army. It was more straightforward to overlook or ignore the needs of the soldier if discussion of the military was confined to figures and statistics. The humanity of the soldier recast the figure of Tommy Atkins into a world relatable for the wider population. As a result, the conditions and experiences which defined military service during this period gained a new relevance which, supported by the efforts of the War Office reformers, acquired increasing legitimacy as a tangible way of life.

Not that negative attitudes or perceptions of the soldier were eradicated. In some cases, the press highlight the damage some reforms were capable of inflicting on the image and identity of the soldier. Short service in particular caused an image crisis. The lowering of the average age of the private and NCO was liable to incite alarm and derision from sections of the public. The perception of child soldiers, unfit for active duty and with service too fleeting to be of use to the army rendered their value questionable. However, there is a clear sea-change in the nature of the attitudes expressed towards the soldier, particularly by the 1890s. Public prejudice against the soldier became increasingly unacceptable and attracted growing opposition. The soldier even gained a level of respectability and trust, as his use in advertisements proves. The perception of the soldier acquired an increasingly potent cultural and social value. The army in Britain moved from the outskirts of society to become a beacon for the old values and a bastion for the ideals of chivalry and duty, perceived to still be adhered to

by the soldier and diminishing amongst the youth of Britain. The ordinary soldier moved from being a social reject to a cultural exemplar.

CHAPTER SIX

TOMMY ATKINS IN LITERATURE AND POETRY: HARDY, KIPLING AND HOUSMAN

INTRODUCTION

Section II seeks to locate and assess the image and perception of the soldier in British culture and society following the advent of the Cardwell-Childers Reforms. Chapter 6 will examine the representation and characterisation of the soldier in the literary world, and consider the extent to which this supported or was at odds with the War Office and wider public trends. As it will become apparent, the soldier played only a limited role in the higher literary canon of Victorian England but certain authors did demonstrate an interest in the soldier, primarily Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling and A. E. Housman. This chapter will focus on these three authors and the different interpretations of the soldier they created.

Though not necessarily as part of current affairs, more in-depth explorations of Tommy Atkins' character did take place in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Such efforts were more readily associated with creative mediums and the Arts, for example in literature and poetry. The purpose behind utilising the military as a theme or creative vehicle varied: the soldier appeared as both protagonist and incidental character, a source of romance, adventure or danger and a misunderstood and marginal individual or collective. Importantly however, the presence of the military in literary or poetical settings encouraged interest in the soldier more as a man and a citizen, less as a state or imperial tool to be deployed, reviewed, modified and dispensed with.

Soldiers were not favourite topics for mainstream and High Victorian Literature. Rather in general the army and the other ranks in particular experienced a decidedly limited presence in the canon of mid-to-late-nineteenth-century novels: a fact which as John Peck in his study of the British Army in Victorian literature confesses, does not make for a promising study of the subject but which in itself requires exploration. The soldier character was, as Penny Summerfield has identified, a stalwart of the Music Hall tradition and central to the rising sub-genre of juvenile and imperial adventure literature.¹ Novelists and their readership however, expressed far less appetite for the redcoat. Peck has attributed this to the traditionally low status of the soldier.²

The paucity of the military in literature, as Peck termed it, indicated a post Napoleonic Britain which appeared to have, ‘reconstituted itself on an almost entirely non-military basis’.³ As such, the soldier and the army remained distinctly isolated from Victorian society and the culture it inspired. This trend would continue, encouraged by the limitations of new liberal middle-class philosophies until the effective watershed of the 1870s, the climax of the ‘Great Game’ with Russia and the growth of domestic militarism. The trajectory of this growth of interest in the military would continue until the 1890s by which time soldiering and the empire had become arguably among the most important subjects in literature.⁴

In terms of public engagement, the status of the army as a topic of importance tended to be short lived. In the case of the Crimean War for example, emotional outrage characterised the public response, not a sustained interaction with the military. For the

¹ Summerfield, ‘Patriotism and Empire’, pp.35-37.

² Peck, *War, Army and Victorian Literature*, p.12.

³ Peck, *War, Army and Victorian Literature*, p.2.

⁴ Peck, *War, Army and Victorian Literature*, p.3.

most part the army as an institution, and the men who composed it remained outside of everyday public discourse. As a consequence the British Army existed as a conservative institution ‘muddling through’ and the British public remained ‘not just indifferent to military matters but speaking a different language that had largely eliminated the word ‘war’ except as a metaphor in contexts such as the fight against poverty or the fight against disease’.⁵ As chapters 4 and 5 have highlighted, the public’s relationship with the army on social level developed slowly over the 1870s and 1880s not achieving widespread popularity until the late 1880s. The soldier’s presence in mainstream and highbrow literature reflects his position on the periphery of the British psyche when not featuring in imperial-focussed popular culture.

Very few novelists engaged directly with the army or the soldier as central themes. As Andrew Rutherford observed, ‘in Victorian Britain there was an increasing tendency for the finest literature to focus on those aspects of experience that fell within the limits of civil life, in which man can move securely’.⁶ By this measure the army was certainly excluded. Nor did the ordinary soldier appear to benefit to any great extent from the philanthropic, liberal or socialist rhetoric which came to develop in a literary setting and define the political climate in mid-nineteenth-century Britain. Even Charles Dickens gave remarkably little attention to the redcoat save for *Bleak House* (1852-3). Such social isolation continued to cast the army as an institution into shade culturally as well as socially.

⁵ Peck, *War, Army and Victorian Literature*, pp.12-16.

⁶ Rutherford, *Literature of War*, p.6.

THOMAS HARDY: *FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD* AND *THE TRUMPET MAJOR*.

Though the soldier was a minority figure in Dickens's work - and Dickens was in the literary minority in addressing the soldier at all - he was not alone among English novelists in demonstrating an, albeit limited, interest. As the War Office's movement to popularise the army gathered momentum, novelists began to imagine the soldier as a legitimate literary subject. Among the first to do so was Thomas Hardy. *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874) features as a central character a Sergeant, Francis 'Frank' Troy of the Eleventh Dragoon Guards.⁷ In Troy the soldier is presented as distinctive and powerful. He encompasses a potent combination of dominance, sex appeal and cruelty.

Overall, Troy is not a positive influence in the novel. Central to his development is his role as a destructive love interest for the two central female characters. Troy's selfish and transient nature causes a breakdown in both cases. The soldier abandons his first attachment to a servant girl, Fanny, with whom he had eloped, after a mix up over two churches leaves him accidentally jilted at the altar.⁸ Later in the novel he rejects his second attachment to his wife, a landed farmer named Bathsheba, upon again encountering Fanny and learning of her subsequent destitution. In both instances Troy acts with a cold disregard for the women, choosing desertion when the situation sours rather than to remain and face his responsibilities. His actions reflect many of the negative stereotype about soldiers, which suggested that enlisted men possessed in their characters a natural unreliability and irresponsibility. As Barbara Murray notes, 'Troy is a man of present concerns – he is neither willing nor able to look forward and assess consequences; he is “the erratic child of impulse”'⁹ The army offered the means by

⁷ T. Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd* (London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1994).

⁸ Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, p.114.

⁹ B. Murray, *Far From the Madding Crowd: Notes by Barbara Murray* (Harlow: York Press, Longman Group Ltd., 1982), p.64.

which a man could evade his responsibilities at home and enjoy brief encounters without fear of permanent repercussions. Hardy perpetuates many of the negative stereotypes of the soldier in his characterisation of Troy.

The other male protagonists, Farmers Gabriel Oak and William Boldwood, are kind, sensible and faithful. Whilst the latter is also a flawed character as he pursues Bathsheba with an unnerving intensity and eventually murders Troy as he (Troy) attempts to forcibly reclaim her, he is reliable and dedicated. Gabriel Oak is the steadiest and most positive character in Hardy's novel, accepting Bathsheba's initial rejection and his personal hardships with dignity. He remains to advise and watch over Bathsheba who eventually marries Oak following Troy's and Boldwood's destruction. Nor does the army as an institution and the life soldiers lead garner any great praise from Hardy. A servant reporting Fanny's elopement with Troy constitutes the first mention of the army in the novel. Upon hearing the news her employer exclaims, 'not a steady girl like Fanny'.¹⁰ Hardy highlights that to a young woman's friends and family, the decision to marry a soldier was often not met with approval.

Despite his generally negative presence in the novel, Sergeant Troy also has a distinctive appeal of which his status as a soldier is a definite source. The first introduction between Troy and Bathsheba prominently features reference to his uniform and composure. 'The man upon she was hooked was brilliant in brass and scarlet. He was a soldier.... She had obliquely noticed that he was young and slim, and that he wore three chevrons on his sleeve'.¹¹ Troy's striking appearance conceals his failings as a man, as the uniform was purported to do for the soldier. 'Superficially it is the dashing

¹⁰ Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, p.84.

¹¹ Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, p.156.

soldier, with his handsome appearance, easy conversation and adroit swordplay, who appears the most attractive of Bathsheba's three suitors and it is no wonder that Bathsheba succumbs to his charm', remarks Ralph Elliott.¹² Troy's advantage over the more virtuous but less glamorous Oak and Boldwood reflects the threat soldiers presented to local men when in competition for the attention of local women.

His manner also is notably different from the other men in the novel, exuding confidence and drawing heavily on flirtation and flattery to attract Bathsheba, even on first meeting her. Troy's personality and military background act as potent sources of appeal. 'From behind the wagon a bright scarlet spot emerged and went on unloading unconcernedly... It was the gallant Sergeant, who had come haymaking for pleasure and nobody could deny he was doing the mistress of the farm [Bathsheba] real knight-service by this voluntary contribution of his service'.¹³ Furthermore, the climax of Troy's courting of Bathsheba, something Oak and Boldwood had both previously failed at, is achieved during a display of swordsmanship performed for Bathsheba's benefit. Upon their return after the wedding, Troy buys every man in the local tavern brandy and instructs the women to leave so the men might indulge. There lies beneath Troy's magnetism the distinctive and unavoidable sex appeal of the soldier. As Peck surmises, 'Troy by contrast [to Gabriel Oak] represents excitement and danger...With Troy, we witness the reintroduction of a character who is so traditional that his appearance has to be seen as revolutionary'.¹⁴

¹² R. W. V. Elliot, *A Critical Commentary on Thomas Hardy's 'Far from the Madding Crowd'* (London: MacMillan, 1966), p.23.

¹³ Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, p.162.

¹⁴ Peck, *War, The Army and Victorian Literature*, p.111.

At the same time, however, Troy is presented as the exception in both his volatile persona and his sex appeal. Hardy does not suggest the sergeant's persona is applicable to the entire rank-and-file. Soldiers are afforded a degree of affection by the other characters in the novel, as evidenced by Oak stating 'I like soldiers, but this one [Troy] I do not like'.¹⁵ Troy is not intended to be representative, as highlighted by his unusual background as the bastard son of a local gent: 'He was fairly well educated for a man of middle-class and exceptionally well educated for a common soldier. He spoke fluently and unceasingly'.¹⁶ This makes him rather more dangerous and potent a character than his civilian counterparts and his military comrades but also sets the character apart from his peers.

References are made to soldiers in general, though they are not numerous. Hardy offers brief intimations as to the relationship between the rural English community and the army. The most significant reference relates to a farmer's description of the regiment being handed its marching orders. In this case, the soldiers are treated with sympathy and understanding as the passage criticises the rapidity and limited notice with which the orders were relayed to the troops from the government. 'Afore the Eleventh knew it almost, they were on the march.'¹⁷ The soldiers' departure was described as having had a great effect on the town's people with whom they had established an affinity: 'They pranced down the street playing "The Girl I Left Behind Me", so tis said, in glorious notes of triumph. Every onlooker's insides shook with the blows of the great drum to his deepest vitals and there was not a dry eye in the town among the public house people and nameless women.'¹⁸ Overall Hardy presents a mixed representation of the

¹⁵ Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, p.183.

¹⁶ Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, p.161.

¹⁷ Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, p.84.

¹⁸ Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, p.84.

military, conveying the excitement their presence could bring to civilian populations but also highlighting the risks establishing a connection with soldiers could entail.

In contrast to Sergeant Troy, John Loveday the eponymous Trumpet Major is presented as good natured, decent and upstanding.¹⁹ In *The Trumpet Major* (1880), Hardy once again draws on the ordinary soldier as a protagonist. Margaret Stonyk describes Loveday as ‘a true Hardy hero’ with such qualities as ‘eager self-education despite humble beginnings’; he is easily trusted with an ‘honest face’ yet people are ‘fearful of his judgement and obey his orders’. In quite the reverse of Sergeant Troy, John Loveday has ‘good nature and experience and a nice sense of honour which Hardy sees as true gentility’. Loveday also has romantic involvements, although he loses out to his sailor brother. Despite this, he does not succumb to the vices of either Sergeant Troy or William Boldwood in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, and is ‘admirably sensitive... and is not a disagreeably obsessed lover’.²⁰

The Trumpet Major attempts a significant rewriting of history as the plot is set during the Napoleonic Wars. The reimagining of the soldier as a decent, morally and socially attractive individual is unusual and distinctive. As Peck highlights, ‘the common soldiers in the novel (Loveday in particular) are presented as thoroughly decent young men from respectable families. Their families may have been disappointed at the vocation they had chosen but remain close and committed to their sons’.²¹ By 1880, the War Office’s movement to redefine the received notions of what constituted the character of the soldier was well underway and enjoying a second round of reform.

¹⁹ Hardy, *The Trumpet Major* (New York: R. H. Macy, 1882).

²⁰ M. Stonyk, *Notes on The Trumpet Major by Thomas Hardy* (London: Longman York Press, 1980), p.53.

²¹ Peck, *War, the Army and Victorian Literature*, p.115.

Progress was slow however and despite the growing acknowledgement that some young gentlemen might enlist for the opportunity for travel and excitement offered by short service, the social complexion of the army and corresponding moral values were not perceived to have been greatly transformed. This highlights the distinctive and novel stance Hardy adopts with regards to his interpretation of the soldier, both as a contemporary entity and in terms of his reimagined history and breeding. Hardy instils in the soldier a sense of honour and courage which defines him beyond the confines of military activity.

Hardy certainly addressed the issue of Tommy Atkins' social rehabilitation, as *The Trumpet Major* attested to, but it could not be argued with any real vehemence that the objectives of his efforts were to rescue the soldier's character from the pit in which it languished. *The Trumpet Major* was as much a reimagining as it was a renewed representation and the historical setting further stretched any direct association between the character of the Napoleonic hero and that of the soldier in the flesh. And *Far from the Madding Crowd* presented in Sergeant Troy a man more endowed with unworthy and distasteful qualities than positive and uplifting ones. At best, such works encouraged a sense of ambiguity about the soldier's character: he was not necessarily a low-bred low-life, but he was not at one with polite society either.

RUDYARD KIPLING

Hardy demonstrated a greater than average interest in the soldier when it came to his literary work and his later Boer War poetry. For any study considering the presence of the soldier in Victorian society and culture, however, Rudyard Kipling would be the foremost author. Kipling was remarkable in the unsurpassed energy, engagement and

impact he achieved through his novels, short stories and poetry which dealt directly with 'Tommy Atkins'. Central to several of these works was the position and esteem of the soldier in the social and cultural realms of Britain and her Empire. Whereas the soldier might appear as a peripheral character, the hero in adventure literature or the anti-hero in the more highbrow novel, the soldier in Kipling took centre stage and made no apology.

Whilst the experience of the frontier and the occasional excitement of military life formed an enticing source of ideas for Kipling and formed the basis of many of his most enduring works, the author was not mercenary in his use of the army as a theme. David Bradshaw has stated that, 'he regarded both the officers and the rank-and-file regulars engaged in Britain's seemingly incessant imperial wars and border skirmishes as unjustly denigrated or ignored by those at home'.²² With arguably more rapid, potent and permanent success than the War Office's complex and drawn-out reforms of the 1870s and 1880s, Kipling actively sought to address the social and cultural isolation and rejection from which the soldier suffered at the hands of the public.

Kipling produced a great deal of literature in which he addressed, featured or referenced the soldier. The majority were published and consumed in the remaining two decades of the nineteenth century coinciding closely with the revival of militarism and imperialist nationalism of the 1880s and 1890s and the spike of interest brought about by the South African War (1899-1902). The first soldiers to appear in Kipling's work were officers imbued with the public school ethos which came to define the core of the officer class in the Great War. Soon however, the ordinary soldier began to come to prominence in the

²² D. Bradshaw, 'Kipling and War' in *The Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling*, ed. by H. J. Booth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p.81.

short stories and poems of Kipling's earlier work. Most notable perhaps were the three private soldiers Malvaney, Ortheris and Learoyd who first appeared in *The Three Musketeers* (1887), and reappeared in *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888) alongside *Soldiers Three* (1888) and *Tommy* (1890).

Soldiers and army life were addressed in other works including *The Taking of Lungtungpen* (1887) and *The Window Party* (1890) and perhaps most famously *The Barrack Room Ballads* (1892) and *The Seven Seas* (1896). The Second Boer War would provide a further impetus for military poetry and stories such as those contained in *The Captive* (1902), and *The Comprehension of Private Cooper* (1902) and *The Five Nations* (1903). Kipling was frequently critical of the military's conduct and organisation in South Africa and often used the perspective of the ordinary soldier to convey his concern and disappointment at the higher command.²³

Kipling had a considerable and a broad appeal which included critics and reviewers as well as consumers and music hall goers and among them, the soldiers themselves. Steve Attridge has attributed this popularity in part to the 'ascendency of new imperialism' as well as the ability of Kipling to appeal across traditional cultural boundaries.²⁴ The author has long since lost much of his popular appeal, largely due to now outdated attitudes expressed with relation to the empire, imperialism and the colonial peoples. Such a decline was present as early as the 1910s.²⁵ It should also be noted however, particularly when examining his contemporary impact and influence on the image of the soldier, that Kipling was hugely popular and highly regarded both within and outside

²³ Bradsaw, 'Kipling and War', pp.81-82.

²⁴ Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity*, p.73.

²⁵ Booth, *Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling*, p.1.

Britain. Kipling was the first author writing in English to be awarded a Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907. It was conferred ‘in consideration’, the prize citation stated, ‘of the power of observation, originality of imagination, virility of ideas and remarkable talent for narration which characterize the creations of this world-famous author’.²⁶

As Attridge has discussed, Kipling was controversial from the outset. He garnered critical success but caused consternation among aesthetes for whom he presented an ‘unapologetic and unacceptable relationship between art and practical life which in this case explored the administrative labour of the Empire’.²⁷ Crucially however, popular audiences broadly approved of Kipling’s attempt to ‘both entertain and to inform’ them.²⁸ And the soldiers, finding themselves the stars, broadly approved of the image Kipling painted of them and on their behalf. The most popular of his efforts were the *Barrack Room Ballads*.

THE SOLDIER AND KIPLING’S *SOLDIERS THREE*

The *Barrack Room Ballads* were not the first of Kipling’s efforts to feature the soldier as the primary focal point. By the early 1890s Kipling had written and published a variety of material, some of which, as in the case of the collection of short stories entitled *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888) had been written in India and published first of all in *The Civil and Military Gazette*.²⁹ Tommy Atkins of the *Ballads* derived from the characters of Privates Mulvaney, Ortheris and Learoyd and the use of dialect stereotyping central to *Soldiers Three*, also published in 1888.

²⁶ The Nobel Foundation, ‘The Nobel Prize in Literature 1907’ [www.nobelprize.org 28/01/14].

²⁷ Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity*, pp.74-75.

²⁸ Bradsaw, ‘Kipling and War’, p.81.

²⁹ A. Rutherford, (ed.), *Kipling: Plain Tales from the Hills* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.259.

The three soldiers first appeared in 'The Three Musketeers', a short story first published in the *Civil and Military Gazette* and republished in *Plain Tales from the Hills*. Kipling tells the tale of the three soldiers recounting their recent efforts to stage a kidnap and rescue of a visiting dignitary who was disliked by officers and men alike for demanding that the regiment parade for him on a Thursday.³⁰ In 'The Three Musketeers', the soldier presented through the three privates is rather devious and crafty but with a commendable level of resourcefulness and pluck. The three profit from their scheme in both money and praise from their target and kudos from their barrack mates as they retain their 'easy Thursday'. In the opening paragraph, Kipling describes the three soldiers as personal friends but also the worst in the regiment for 'genial blackguardism' suggesting that not all soldiers would demonstrate such characteristics, commendable or reprehensible. However, the soldier as presented in 'The Three' could claim any one of a number of admirable qualities and exist in what appeared at times a hostile and pressurised environment around the empire.

Mulvaney, Ortheris and Learoyd reappear in later stories in *Plain Tales from the Hills* such as 'The Madness of Private Ortheris'. In this tale the men appear at first even more genial than before; Mulvaney and Ortheris invite the narrator (Kipling) to join them in a shooting expedition and are dismayed when he arrives bearing beer, at the thought that *that* was their motivation for inviting him.³¹ The character of the soldier is explored with much greater intimacy in this tale and specifically the mind-set and strength of character required of the soldier, especially when overseas. 'The Madness of Private Ortheris' refers to the sudden desire of the character on the evening of their shooting

³⁰ Traditionally an unofficial holiday, a time to write and post letters, mend belongings and relax.

³¹ R. Kipling, 'The Madness of Private Ortheris' in Rutherford (ed.), *Kipling: Plain Tales from the Hills*, p.206.

expedition to desert. He begins lamenting for the life he left behind and the opportunities he had had to settle down in London.³² Mulvaney and the narrator attempt to convince Ortheris to reconsider which he eventually does, abandoning a plan the group had concocted to assist his escape.

The characters Kipling portrays are simultaneously glorious and tragic, heroic and pathetic. The sense of comradeship and military honour is strong as Mulvaney both tries to comfort his friend and chastise his loss of faith in the army. The strength of mind the pair eventually demonstrate in persevering in their duties and the despair they express at their life in the army is both commendable and dismal. Even if caught, Mulvaney admits to the narrator, Ortheris would only receive a short spell in prison, but the shame of it and the black mark against his name was too great. Indeed, the honour present amongst the soldiers appears distinctly insular, with a sense of duty directed more towards each other than the Empire or the British people. Mulvaney notes that when Ortheris was recruited it was he that looked after the 'dirty little, fish-backed little, whimperin' little recruits'.³³ The soldiers look after each other and strengthen the men in a way that the society they left behind had failed to do. The narrator himself presents a rather mixed, well-meaning but patronising assessment as he describes the private soldier as having the heart of a child cultivated to ensure faith and obedience towards the officers. He does not believe civilians so readily, the narrator states, but if and when he eventually does, he believes 'implicitly and like a dog'. He does, however, finish by referring to Private Tommy Atkins as 'my friend... whom I love in general'.³⁴

³² Kipling, 'The Madness of Private Ortheris', p.208.

³³ Kipling, 'The Madness of Private Ortheris', p.213.

³⁴ Kipling, 'The Madness of Private Ortheris', p.214.

THE BARRACK ROOM BALLADS

At the presentation of Kipling's Nobel Prize in December 1907, the Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy described the *Barrack Room Ballads* as:

Magnificent soldier-songs brimming over with virile humour and depicting realistically Tommy Atkins in all his phases, valiantly marching onward to encounter dangers and misery wherever it pleases the Widow of Windsor, or her successor on the throne, to dispatch him.³⁵

The *Barrack Room Ballads* (BRB), a collection of poems dedicated to exploring the life and outlook of the soldier, immerse the reader into the world of the British Tommy through the employment of a London dialect and an engagement with a distinctly military set of issues such as enlistment, discipline and punishment, colonial travel, combat and women. Part of Kipling's experience and inspiration for the *Ballads* came from the years he lived in India as a young man and the time he spent observing soldiers in the region, such as the barracks at Mian Mir which he visited in 1887.³⁶ Another key element of the *Ballads* themselves is a pronounced Music Hall lineage. Time spent in Gatti's Music Hall after his return to the United Kingdom in the late-1880s had encouraged Kipling to develop the soldier character of Private Mulvaney into Tommy Atkins of the *Barrack Room Ballads*.³⁷ Steve Attridge also identified the Music Hall roots, noting each poem was, 'essentially a song, with a repeated refrain, an emphasis on sound repetitions and a strong first person voice that delineates the ballad as a character performance piece which presents an easily apprehended view of the world'.³⁸

As with Kipling more generally, the *BRB* met with critical success but also considerable criticism of their style and content. G. F. Monkshood, in an attempt to assess Kipling's

³⁵ The Nobel Foundation, 'The Nobel Prize in Literature 1907' [www.nobelprize.org, 28 Jan. 2014].

³⁶ A. Lycett, *Rudyard Kipling* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1999), p.126.

³⁷ Lycett, *Rudyard Kipling*, p.188.

³⁸ Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity*, p.73.

work in 1902, claimed that the majority of the reviews they had received were positive, but conceded that there were those who did not rate the author or his work, notably the critics Robert Buchan and W. P. Howells. Writing originally in *Harper's Magazine*, Howells was quoted stating how he felt it was 'pathetic' that with such 'artistic and important' books available, the masses showed a clear preference for the 'Rider Haggards and Rudyard Kiplings of the day'.³⁹

A great deal of the opposition to the *BRB* was rooted in the same prejudices the soldier and the army suffered in general: they represented, spoke for and promoted a class which was believed to be socially degenerate. For their critics, the *BRB* had served to endorse the distaste with which the soldier was treated rather than to encourage enlightenment or understanding. Tommy Atkins came to represent the hooligan and Kipling came to be seen as the 'ringmaster in a conspiracy of hooliganism' which celebrated the 'savages of the London slums as protectors of the empire'.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the *BRB* raised uncomfortable comments regarding the life of the private soldier, the conditions he experienced on tour, his social isolation and monotonous life, an issue which as Section II has highlighted, only commanded the public's attention and concern, to any meaningful extent, from the early 1890s.

For the most part however, the *BRB* met with approval from the public, and to a large extent, from the soldiers themselves. As the Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy had claimed, 'In Kipling the British Army has found a minstrel to interpret in a new, original, and tragi-comical manner the toils and deprivations through which it

³⁹ G. F. Monkshood, *Rudyard Kipling: The Man and his Work an Attempt at Appreciation* (London: Greening & Co. Ltd., 1902), p.190.

⁴⁰ Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism and Identity*, p.85.

has to pass, and to depict its life and work with abundant acknowledgment of the great qualities it displays, but without the least trace of meretricious embellishment'.⁴¹ For many soldiers it was felt that Kipling appreciated the 'humour and resolution' with which they performed their duties.⁴² Such approval, despite numerous complaints about coarseness and vulgarity, did extend to critics and a highbrow readership also. Lionel Johnson praised their 'enforced vigour and exaggerated truth' whilst Edmund Gosse had commented on 'the rollicking storm of the verses', their 'genuine humour' and underlying 'melancholy'.⁴³

In his ballads Kipling includes a variety of issues connected to the soldier's existence which present several scenarios, situations and messages. His desire to address the low status of the soldier in domestic Victorian society is clear. It is present in the opening dedication to 'T.A.' from 'R.K.'.⁴⁴ Kipling states that in the forthcoming collection he sought to illustrate the life and ways of the soldier, both his 'pleasure' and his 'pain'. In the short two-verse piece Kipling makes direct reference to the mistreatment soldiers have suffered at the hands of those they have served, wistfully hoping that, 'there will surely come a day when they give you all your pay, and treat you as a Christian ought to do'.⁴⁵ Kipling is quite cutting in his criticism, condemning the War Office and the public as ignorant of realities for the soldier, of un-Christian-like conduct towards them and of withholding what was rightfully theirs.

⁴¹ The Nobel Foundation, 'The Nobel Prize in Literature 1907' [accessed at www.nobelprize.org, 28 Jan. 2014].

⁴² Lycett, *Rudyard Kipling*, p.126.

⁴³ H. Ricketts, 'Nine and Sixty Ways: Kipling, Ventriloquist Poet', in *Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling*, ed. by H. J. Booth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp.115-116.

⁴⁴ R. Kipling, 'To T.A.', in *Barrack Room Ballads and Other Verses* (London: Methuen & Co., 1892), p.2.

⁴⁵ Kipling, 'To T.A.', p.2.

The expense of the military for the British tax-payer was at the heart of many of the struggles the army and servicemen faced. The soldier's pay remained poor and this was exacerbated by the system of stoppages for groceries and essentials which diminished it further. This caused considerable controversy among the soldiers and those advocating improvements to their conditions. Through his dedication Kipling not only places the issue of pay front and centre but indicates thievery on the part of the authorities by holding back on rightful pay. 'To T.A.' set forth a clear tone for the *BRB* leaving no doubt as to Kipling's attitude towards soldiers, wishing them 'safe and sound' and offering his 'best respects'.⁴⁶

Kipling highlights from the outset the public's contradictory and fickle treatment of the soldier. 'Tommy', the second ballad in the collection, presents a complaint directed against the British public.⁴⁷ The piece cites several instances in which soldiers may be treated unfavourably: in public houses and theatres; in light of their poor rations; or making a mockery of their uniforms. 'Tommy' reads as the rant of a soldier repeatedly spurned from public before, from the same quarters, receiving praise as he departs for war on their behalf. The first verse describes barmaids in a pub laughing as the barman ejects the soldier telling him 'we serve no red-coats here!' The refrain angrily muses 'O It's Tommy this an' Tommy that an' 'Tommy, go away'; But it's 'thank you Mister Atkins' when the band begins to play'.⁴⁸

The second and third verses describe a sober soldier being sent to the stalls in a theatre despite a drunken civilian being shown to the gallery and the hustling of a drunken

⁴⁶ Kipling, 'To T.A.', p. 2.

⁴⁷ Kipling, 'Tommy', in *Barrack Room Ballads and Other Verses* (London: Methuen & Co., 1892), pp.6-9.

⁴⁸ Kipling, 'Tommy', p. 6.

soldier by civilians who would not submit to the hardships of soldiering themselves. The refrains again bitterly repeat such hypocritical sentiments: 'For it's 'Tommy, wait outside', then, 'Special Train for Atkins when the trooper's on the tide'; or 'it's Tommy, 'ow's yer soul', then, 'it's 'Thin red line of 'eroes' when the drums begin to roll'.⁴⁹ Kipling's attack extends to encompass the supporters of army reform too, suggesting that all the 'talk o' better food for us, an' schools an' fires an' all', are rather hollow gestures and that rather than tinkering with conditions, a forthright and open expression of support and respect would be rather more greatly appreciated. 'Tommy' ends with a warning – 'An' Tommy ain't a bloomin' fool – you bet that Tommy sees!'⁵⁰

Despite its combative beginnings, the *BRB* are not a simply an extended attack on the British public's relationship with its army. Kipling's intention was broad and aimed at raising awareness about life and the experiences of the soldier. Whilst he was undoubtedly a 'friend' to the soldier however, he was not a servant to the War Office or those responsible for recruiting. In striving to attain realism and authenticity, the *BRB* present the perspective of the soldier warts and all, and in some cases they read as much like a warning against the military existence as an introduction to it.

'The Young British Soldier' is a particularly striking example.⁵¹ The ballad follows the brief and unhappy career of the recruit by way of advice on how to survive the numerous obstacles he would face. The opening stanza states, 'When the 'arf-made recruity goes out to the East e' acts like a babe an' 'e drinks like a beast, An' 'e wonders

⁴⁹ Kipling, 'Tommy', pp. 6-7.

⁵⁰ Kipling, 'Tommy', pp. 8-9.

⁵¹ Kipling, 'The Young British Soldier' in *Barrack Room Ballads and Other Verses* (London: Methuen & Co., 1892), pp.46-49.

because 'e is frequent deceased.'⁵² The ballad proceeds to list the dangers the recruit would face: gut-rotting grog; cholera; the sun; fatigue; finding a wife; losing the wife to another soldier (and resisting the urge to commit murder); the enemy guns; enemy bullets; being pinned down and finally being wounded and taking your own life in the desert. The realities alluded to by Kipling are brutal and wretched, although in this case they were not directed by way of criticism against the War Office or the public. Instead they present in stark colours the confusion and perils faced by the young men who enlist and inform the reader a little of what life was like on deployment in the empire.

As Bradshaw has argued, Kipling is not gung-ho in his approach to the army and is often more concerned with the status of the soldier and the Empire than he is about the military as a source of adventure and excitement.⁵³ This fact is apparent in the style and content of the *BRB*. Kipling, in the course of twenty-one ballads, touches upon a variety of issues which came to define military life and in the process introduces his readership to the realities of the soldier's existence. For instance, two ballads which explore some of the more infamous aspects of the soldier's character, namely drunkenness, violence and women, are 'Cells' and 'The Ladies'.

'Cells' describes an NCO imprisoned in the orderly room for being drunk and striking out when he was arrested.⁵⁴ For the majority of the ballad, the prisoner displays limited contrition, limited fear of punishment and even takes pride in his assault on the corporal. The underlying impression is of boredom with military life. Concern only enters when in a later stanza when the soldier confesses that his wife and child are left at

⁵² Kipling, 'The Young British Soldier', p.46.

⁵³ Bradsaw, 'Kipling and War', p.82.

⁵⁴ Kipling, 'Cells', in *Barrack Room Ballads and Other Verses* (London: Methuen & Co., 1892), pp.20-22.

the barrack gate alone and he admits, 'It ain't that I mind the Ord'ly room – it's *that* that cuts so hard'.⁵⁵ Though the soldier's conduct is not excusable, the realities of the situation are thrown into sharp focus. The man was arrested for being drunk and resisting arrest by the guard, something a civilian would not ordinarily be so readily subject to. As a result, he loses his rank, a considerable amount of pay and access to his family for a fortnight. The soldier acknowledges that later he will promise to abstain from alcohol, but whether it be for boredom, weakness or peer pressure, he knows he'll do it again.

'The Ladies', published in a later volume of ballads entitled *The Seven Seas* (1896), touches on a further infamous element of the soldier's reputation, that of a womaniser.⁵⁶ Once again, Kipling offers little in the way of an excuse for the behaviour allegedly engaged in by soldiers, but does present some explanation and also a suggestion of regret. 'The Ladies' recounts a young soldier's four most profound relationships with women he met during his service with the army. From each encounter the young soldier learnt something about how to handle women. But in the ballad the soldier denies being a lothario and expresses regret, claiming that he now pays for his past because having been with several women he cannot settle on one.

'The Ladies' is also one of the more racially charged ballads, especially when referring to the differing ethnicity of the women featured. As with 'Cells', the reader is not presented with a wholly sympathetic impression of the soldier, as he demonstrates a casual attitude to the women he meets and, in the case of the married Indian woman, treats her with little respect and more as an exotic interest. A large proportion of the

⁵⁵ Kipling, 'Cells', p.21.

⁵⁶ Kipling, 'The Ladies', from *The Seven Seas* [accessed on ebooks.adelaide.edu.au 29 Jan. 2014].

soldier's actions may be attributed to the nature of army life however. In the case of the second lady in particular, the soldier claims that were he not redrafted he would have stayed with her and that they would possibly be married. Kipling highlights the youth of the soldier when he is drafted (the indications are that he was sixteen years old) and the upset to his life caused by movement around the Empire which led to a period of recklessness before finding a girl on his way home. In this light the soldier becomes rather more human and the pressures of his existence unlike a civilian's take on increasing importance.

The impact of Kipling's *BRB* lay in this combination of honesty and openness with defiance and apology. Kipling addresses several of the criticisms and stereotypes the public were known to commonly harbour in relation to the soldier and the army: roughness of character, promiscuity, intemperance, criminality, discomfort and danger. Kipling addresses these issues head-on, acknowledging their presence and in some cases, such as in 'The Ladies', apologising to some degree. Equally however, any apology Kipling proffers is limited as the vices of the soldier are presented at least in part as a product of life in the British Army. Kipling seeks to highlight how the idiosyncrasies of the soldier are necessary in order to survive.

The *BRB* represent perhaps the boldest and the most honest attempt to engage with the army to appear in Victorian literature. They are most credited with giving the ordinary soldier a voice and using the language and vernacular of the soldier, even if it dealt primarily with a London or South-East regional accent. More significant however, is the fact that Kipling's efforts did not have any great practical motive in seeking to inform the public about the realities of Tommy Atkins. The image of the army and of the

soldier he painted was not one of glory, glamour or adventure. For the most part, the *BRB* dealt with issues of fear, disease, discomfort and hardship. Whereas the efforts of the War Office to engage public opinion regarding the army and encourage a change in perception were to encourage recruiting, the *BRB* sought only to feed the public's interest in the military and encourage a revision of the soldier's character for the soldier's sake. The study of Kipling's *BRB* and the other material he produced on the army is of particular relevance to this study because it offers both an indication of the changing identity of Tommy Atkins in social and cultural perspectives in Britain but also highlighted the continuing problems the army faced. Whereas the literature and poetry of the mid-to-late-nineteenth century had largely taken its leave of the soldier, Kipling placed the soldier and his problems centre stage.

Furthermore, the *BRB* offer a useful insight into the progress of the Cardwell-Childers Reforms. Published in two main volumes: the *BRB* in 1892 and the *Seven Seas* in 1896 highlighted several issues central to the reforms objectives of 1868-74 and 1880-82. Ballads such as 'Tommy' demonstrate the continuing discrimination soldiers experienced in public and highlight the hardships and difficulties soldiers, and recruits in particular, continued to experience. Ballads such as 'Shillin' a Day' criticised the low value still placed on experienced soldiers, as a late-Troop Sergeant Major recollects the places he had travelled to and fought in and how his efforts had been rewarded with a paltry pension upon which he was expected to build a new life.⁵⁷ It was a concerted effort to raise the profile of the soldier in Britain and encourage a re-examination of his terms and conditions of service.

⁵⁷ Kipling, 'A Shilling a Day' in *Barrack Room Ballads and Other Verses* (London: Methuen & Co., 1892), pp.70-71.

KIPLING'S SIGNIFICANCE AND ACCURACY

The soldier Kipling presents is distinctive and memorable. The grittiness in his portrayal is an outstanding feature. In comparison to the military men of Hardy, Kipling's Mulvaney, Ortheris and Learoyd have the immediate distinction that, unlike Loveday, they are not part of a historical reimagining of the Napoleonic army. They are also presented in their natural surroundings in barracks and in India, as opposed to Troy who gallivants around England. The impression Kipling portrays of The Three, and of the soldier in *BRB* and his other short stories is on the whole ugly and unapproachable. It seems unlikely that a civilian upon reading Kipling would feel compelled to befriend a uniformed man.

Indeed, to suggest that Rudyard Kipling's work received universal praise and gratitude from soldiers would be a gross misrepresentation. Several charges were levied against the author that his work had in fact damaged further the army's social standing. Robert Blatchford was particularly outspoken, criticising Kipling's theatricality and the generalisation employed in his characterisation of the soldier. 'Kipling is a man of genius', states Blatchford in his own memoir, 'but he has done a great deal of prejudice to the soldier in the eyes of the public. The amusing young "Tommy" of *The Barrack Room Ballads* and *Soldiers Three* is the exception, not the rule in our army.'⁵⁸ The praise that Kipling's work had lifted the veil on the soldier, rendering him a familiar and popular character to the public, was equally Kipling's sin; the *real* soldier was not as illiterate nor as immoral as he was represented.

⁵⁸ R. Blatchford, *My Life in the Army* (London: Amalgamated Press Ltd., 1910), p.125.

What Kipling does offer however is an insight into the world of the soldier. He does not attempt to soften the rough edges of the barrack room or insist that beneath the tunic beat the heart of a gentleman. Instead, Kipling presented to the British public a determined elucidation as to the realities of life for the soldier and the genuine fears and concerns they expressed, as well as a protest against the social exclusion the army continued to suffer. The various military works of Kipling appealed to a broad literary and popular audience and presented army life as he perceived it. There was no glamour, sugar coating or exaggeration about the advantages of the army and it does not seem likely that the likes of the *Barrack Room Ballads* would have encouraged recruiting. What they may have encouraged was a reconsideration of the public's perception of the soldier.

A. E. HOUSMAN AND A SHROPSHIRE LAD

Kipling may have been the most prolific and outspoken advocate of the soldier but as the nineteenth century drew to a close support for Tommy Atkins was on the increase. Kipling was not alone in using the soldier as the subject of his literary work nor in offering a sympathetic and supportive light in the portrayal which he created. This is not to suggest that the military enjoyed out-and-out popularity in the literary canon. Throughout the 1890s it remained on the periphery of mainstream literature and poetry beyond juvenile adventure literature. There were, however, examples of the soldier appearing as a central and even positive character. Around the time the *BRB* and the ensuing *Seven Seas* enjoyed their enthusiastic receptions, Alfred Edward Housman, a Classics Professor at University College London, were first published.

A Shropshire Lad (ASL) is a collection of sixty-three poems by Housman first published by Kegan Paul (at the author's expense) in March 1896. Of the sixty-three poems, at least seven feature the army or soldiers and deal with a variety of military related subjects, including recruits and enlistment, public debt to the army and the experiences of men in battle. Housman's motivation for including the soldier and the army in his poetry, based around rural Shropshire, is not fully established by literary scholars. Jeffrey Weeks and Keith Jebb have suggested that Housman's homosexuality *may* have been a factor as letters written by Housman to his mother suggest an infatuation with The Guards in London began in his youth.⁵⁹

There is a clear sense of affection for the soldier in *ASL*. Various issues are engaged with in Housman's poetry, such as the presence of the army in rural communities, the experiences of the men it attracts and the attitudes of the people from that community. Initially, there is a strong element of glory in Housman's description of military service and death, although the poetry did not accompany the more broadly recognised jingoism of the music halls. Housman seeks to honour soldiers rather than worship them and while the symbol of the British soldier as potentially a feared and potent warrior reoccurs in several of the poems, there is not an obvious nationalist or homosexual agenda. Housman does not single out an enemy nor encourage foreign aggression by Britain. Neither do his references to military camaraderie and mutual support explicitly indicate homosexual attraction. As Jebb argues, 'homosexuality is outside of the language, a hinterland of hints that may not even be intended'.⁶⁰ His focus is distinctly insular, emphasising the glory of the soldier and the praise of his family, friends and comrades.

⁵⁹ J. Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*, in 'The Land of Lost Content' by K. Jebb, in *A. E. Housman: A Reassessment*, ed. by A. W. Holden and R. J. Birch (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p.46.

⁶⁰ Jebb, 'The Land of Lost Content', pp.46-47.

It should be noted that *ASL* did not enjoy immediate popular success, unlike the *BRB*, although critical acclaim was more forthcoming. So pronounced was the difference between popular and critical success, *ASL* was given a second print run by Grant Richards, himself a reviewer of the collection in *Review of Reviews* in 1898. Yet despite such professional approval and a further two editions, only 1500 copies had been sold in the UK by 1902. The events of the South African War and the spike of popular interest in the army began to exert some influence on the public's appetite for Housman and sales increased exponentially, assisted by cheaper editions being printed.⁶¹

Whilst *ASL* does not present a perspective on popular literary consumption in Victorian Britain, the attitudes contained within continue to have relevance to a study exploring the social and cultural presence and development of the soldier. The military themes encouraged particular enthusiasm from the critics; Fisher notes that Spencer Blackett, the manager at publishers Kegan Paul even wanted the volume to be reworked into 'a romance of enlistment'.⁶² Housman as a poet and classics scholar did not enjoy any extraordinary affiliation with the army, indeed the military plays only a relatively minor, if striking, part in the collection as a whole. However, *ASL* is a product of its time and makes reference to the circumstances in which the army and the soldier existed and attitudes civilians may have expressed with regard to it.

The first poem in *ASL*, entitled 'I. 1887', commemorates the Queen's Golden Jubilee and is the most controversial and arguably blasphemous poem in the collection.⁶³ The poem itself reads more as a tribute to the soldiers of the Queen themselves. As

⁶¹ Holden & Birch, 'Introduction' in *A. E. Housman: A Reassessment*, p.xiii.

⁶² B. F. Fisher, 'The Critical Reception of A Shropshire Lad', in (eds.), *A. E. Housman: A Reassessment*, p.25.

⁶³ A. E. Housman, 'I. 1887' in *A Shropshire Lad* (London: The Richards Press, 1944), pp.1-3.

Housman generously terms it, God had saved the Queen, and the soldiers had ‘shared the work with God’, placing the soldier on a considerable pedestal.⁶⁴ Describing the lighting of beacons in the hills and valleys of Shropshire to mark the Jubilee, Housman encourages the remembrance of soldiers who had been instrumental in the success of the Queen’s reign but were unable to return home to share in the celebrations.

Housman’s praise, in naming the Shropshire Regiment (the 53rd Regiment of Foot), is specific. The poem describes the graves of men from the Severn buried by the Nile and the Asian sun rising over tombstones bearing Shropshire names. This offers greater detail and indication to the men and deeds to whom he refers. Housman does not pay the backhanded compliment so often a feature in Kipling’s approaches to the soldier and makes no distinction between military prowess and personal standards or breeding when addressing the men beneath the uniform. Instead, Housman concludes by urging a continuation of the soldiers’ line and telling them to, ‘be you the men you’ve been and get you the sons your fathers got’, a situation which with God’s support he suggests would be sufficient in guaranteeing ongoing security of the realm.⁶⁵

In the third poem in the collection, ‘III. The Recruit’, Housman echoes the recruiter’s rhetoric. A man from Ludlow is encouraged to enlist and promised either a hero’s reception if he returns or long-lasting praise from his friends and neighbors should he not.⁶⁶ In many respects, ‘The Recruit’ is much more militaristic than the majority of Kipling’s work, especially regarding the soldier. Housman guarantees strength before the enemy and glory back home. Moreover, dying is presented as an opportunity for posthumous longevity in the minds of friends, family and comrades and enlisting and

⁶⁴ Housman, ‘I. 1887’, p.1.

⁶⁵ Housman, ‘I. 1887’, p.3.

⁶⁶ Housman, ‘III. The Recruit’ in *A Shropshire Lad* (London: The Richards Press, 1944), pp 4 -6.

risking such a fate is worth its reward. The poignant symbol of Ludlow Tower is repeated throughout the poem as a marker by which the durability of the dead soldier's memory may be measured and by way of an assurance that as long as the ways and customs of Ludlow, Shropshire and England remain, the soldier's sacrifice will be felt.⁶⁷

A similar perspective is adopted again in a later poem, untitled aside from its number in the sequence, 'XXIII'.⁶⁸ In 'XXIII' Housman describes a fair, again set in Ludlow, in which the local youth most of whom are agricultural workers gather. Among them, Housman reflects, are lads who 'will never be old'.⁶⁹ As with 'The Recruit', Housman strongly emphasizes this sense of immortality and longevity associated with men who die in service as he ponders the young men who are 'handsome and brave' and the men who will carry their 'looks or their truth to the grave'.⁷⁰ There is a sense of melancholy in Housman's writing as he laments the impossibility to identify which of the young lads at the social gathering would go on to serve and potentially die in the army and expresses his desire to know in advance so he and the community might have the opportunity to wish them farewell. Furthermore, Housman appears in both 'The Recruit' and 'XXIII' to hold the soldier up as an exemplar for man, one of which God himself would be proud. The young soldiers' deaths are equated to carrying back 'bright to the coiner the mintage of man.'⁷¹

As well as pondering the future of the local young men and military service, Housman also explores the wider presence the local regiment has in the community with which it comes into contact. In 'XXII', Housman describes how, 'the street sounds to the

⁶⁷ Housman, 'III. The Recruit', pp.4-6.

⁶⁸ Housman, 'XXIII', in *A Shropshire Lad* (London: The Richards Press, 1944), pp.33-34.

⁶⁹ Housman, 'XXIII', p.33.

⁷⁰ Housman, 'XXIII', p.33.

⁷¹ Housman, 'XXIII', p.34.

soldiers' tread, And out we troop to see'.⁷² The imposing presence of a regiment marching through a town and the interest among the local inhabitants it attracts is clearly indicated. The use of 'troop' for the civilian onlookers adds further affinity with the soldiers. The scene echoes Hardy's departure of the Eleventh Dragoon Guards in *Far from the Madding Crowd*.⁷³ Again the tone of the poem is positive in its handling of the soldier. Housman reflects how a redcoat, whose glance he catches as he marches past, he is unlikely to encounter again and what common thoughts or concerns they might hold but never share.

'XXII' concludes with Housman reflecting on how unlikely it would be that the two men meet again and that he would never grow to know the soldier better. In any case, and in whatever circumstances the soldier may find himself, Housman offers his kind regards; 'alive or dead, drunk or dry, soldier, I wish you well'. Such sentiments somewhat echo Kipling's earlier dedication to T.A., 'And, Thomas, here's my best respects to you! R.K.'.⁷⁴

As Kipling had attempted in the *BRB* and his soldier-orientated short stories, Housman also wanted to consider and present the soldier as a man and as a person with thoughts, family and a background. As the earlier poems had considered the soldier in his home surroundings before enlisting and the proud family and friends left behind, Housman also dedicated one poem to the possible motivations for a man enlisting. The lady in the title of, 'XXXIV. The New Mistress', is the army.⁷⁵ Written as a conversation between a young man and his sweetheart, as denoted by quotation marks and italics, the poem presents the army as a more reliable and consistent source of care and support for the

⁷² Housman, 'XXII', in *A Shropshire Lad* (London: The Richards Press, 1944), p.32.

⁷³ Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, p.84.

⁷⁴ Kipling, 'To. T.A.', in *Barrack Room Ballads*, p.2.

⁷⁵ Housman, 'XXXIV The New Mistress', in *A Shropshire Lad* (London: The Richards Press, 1944), pp.49-50.

man than the woman who dismisses him. In contrast to the woman, the poem describes the army being accepting and caring for the man, providing him with clothing, beer and food, never being dissatisfied with his company and asking only that he keep his uniform clean.

The scenario Housman presents is, on one level, plain and straightforward. 'The New Mistress' describes the reasons for a man enlisting when, in this instance, he is rejected by his sweetheart. Housman also offers a critical reading of the apparent social neglect suffered by some men who then turn to the army for shelter and support. This interpretation becomes particularly pertinent in the final stanza in which the man celebrates the fact that there is always enough work and that in the army any man may be appreciated and effective. Yet it is not a wholly appealing prospect as he describes working where 'the standing line wears thinner and the dropping dead lie thick'.⁷⁶ In this light the 'old mistress' is a metaphor for the society from which a man may be driven as he is told he is worthless and his presence is unwanted. This was a commonly cited and broadly perceived reason for men enlisting and one which traditionally fed the negative stereotypes of the soldier. Housman inverts the disgrace of the soldier to reflect on the society which drove him to a comparatively tender and welcoming military, and a potentially premature end.

There enters into Housman's interpretation of enlistment in 'XXXIV, The New Mistress', a new dimension of desperation which replaces communal encouragement. The army arises again in *ASL* in 'XXXV'.⁷⁷ 'XXXIV' and 'XXXV' appear towards the end of the poems' progression. When all seven soldier-related poems are examined together an increasing negativity becomes apparent in Housman's attitude to enlistment,

⁷⁶ Housman, 'XXXIV, The New Mistress', p.50.

⁷⁷ Housman, 'XXXV', in *A Shropshire Lad* (London: The Richards Press, 1944), p.51.

military service and death in battle. In the opening lines of 'XXXV', Housman describes the 'idle hill of summer, Sleepy with the flow of streams, Far I hear the steady drummer, Drumming like a noise in dreams'. The poem reads as a gradual awakening to the passing of time and the inevitable approach of battle. Gone is the fascination with the pomp and spectacle of the soldier and the glory each man could expect to achieve for his efforts; 'XXXV' demonstrates a rather more disconsolate attitude as it mourns the 'dear friends' and 'lovely lads' who are to be 'food for [gun] powder', 'marching all to die' and will become 'dead and rotten' as their bones are 'bleached' in 'fields forgotten'.⁷⁸

What in earlier poems seemed a distant event and golden opportunity for glory and longevity is increasingly near and the consequences of battle begin to over shadow the now distant approval of friends and family. Housman does not paint a complete picture of gloom for the soldier as he describes how 'gay, the files of scarlet follow' the fife and the bugle.⁷⁹ However less concern is given to the immortality and commemoration the dead men might enjoy in the hearts and minds their people back home. Instead the poem laments enduring loss over abiding remembrance and an awakening to the realities that 'none that go return again'.⁸⁰

Housman's final poem to deal with the army, 'LVI, The Day of Battle', is by far the darkest in tone. As the soldier-poems in *ASL* appear to lead the reader from enlistment in 'The Recruit' to an approaching war in 'XXXV', 'The Day of Battle' explores the reasoning which might pass through a man's mind as he finally faces the enemy. Whereas the earlier poems sought to distance the fear of battle and death, focusing

⁷⁸ Housman, 'XXXV', p.51.

⁷⁹ Housman, 'XXXV', p.51.

⁸⁰ Housman, 'XXXV', p.51.

instead on the glory of death in service and the longevity of the memory of the fallen, such emotions in 'The Day of Battle' are unavoidable. For Housman, the options and their underlying reasoning are simple: stand and die today a hero or flee and die tomorrow a coward.

The motivation Housman offers his soldier remains constant; the only morsel of encouragement in 'The Day of Battle' is the knowledge that 'cowards' funerals, when they come, are not wept so well at home'.⁸¹ The tone of the poem indicates reluctance. Whereas in 'XXXV' the file of scarlet had gaily followed the bugle, in 'The Day of Battle' the soldier admits, 'Far, I hear the bugle blow, To call me where I would not go'.⁸² In the closing stanza Housman employs an uncharacteristic shot of brutality as the soldier resigns himself to the fact that he would do best to stand and face the enemy and 'take the bullet in your [sic] brain'.

When considered as a collection, the soldier poems in *ASL* explore the young man's departure from his home community to enlist, the motivation behind such an action, how the people he leaves behind perceive his choices and finally what may wait in store. One reading of Housman's interpretation of the army would suggest that his is rather a naïve and clichéd one. At the forefront of many of the poems, 'I. 1887', 'III. The Recruit', 'XXII' and 'XXIII', is the perceived praise and fascination soldiers can enjoy from the friends, family and towns-folk of their homes. Less consideration is given to the restrictive or isolating nature of military life or the dislocation men in barracks could feel from society. In 'XXXIV. The New Mistress' in particular, the motivation for enlistment detailed by Housman overlooks some key realities of military

⁸¹ Housman, 'LVI, The Day of Battle', in *A Shropshire Lad* (London: The Richards Press, 1944), pp.85-86.

⁸² Housman, 'LVI, The Day of Battle', p.85.

life. As the War Office under Childers had endeavoured to improve the transparency and honesty of recruiting in the early 1880s, one of the criticisms continually directed against the army was the relatively meagre rations each man was entitled to and the addition of stoppages to a man's pay for all but the most basic essentials. By that score, unlike Housman's claim, the beer and breakfast were not free and whilst each man was issued periodically with a uniform, the garments rarely withstood the wear and tear to which they were subjected and replacements to the kit, no matter the reason, were paid for by the soldier.

ASL received a mixed critical reception from some reviewers in respect of the treatment of enlistment and the promotion of the army as a means to secure a glorious death. Fisher has noted how critics censured Housman and *ASL* for suggesting that soldiers only enlisted to enhance, 'the credit of Shropshire', and for, 'valuing soldiering much less for the unique opportunities which it offers to a young man for serving his country than for the unique facilities which it affords him for winning a speedy and honourable death'.⁸³ However, 'XXXV' and 'LVI. The Day of Battle' illustrate another side to Housman's appreciation of military service. The emphasis shifts away from a celebration of death whilst still in the prime of life to lamenting the loss of young men and the realities of the situation the soldiers faced when finally they stand upon the battlefield and the fighting begins. The glory remains but is less convincing and less pertinent to the soldier's perception of his situation than in the earlier poems.

The image of the soldier presented by Housman differs considerably from that offered by Kipling. In both cases the authors demonstrate remarkable generosity in their

⁸³ Fisher, 'The Critical Reception of A Shropshire Lad', p.26.

appreciation of the ordinary soldier, his background and surroundings and pledge their goodwill. The perception of the military existence is incredibly different however, with Housman basing his interpretation of the soldier on his local presence, considering the nature of enlistment, the transition of a rural civilian to soldier and the appeal such a move might hold. In the first instance, the soldier of Housman appears to be one constituting a profound level of fantasy. This is evident in the focus on recruits with rural backgrounds in agriculture and other country vocations. By the 1890s, urbanisation was sufficient that the army struggled greatly to recruit rural men and found its regiments populated primarily by men from the great urban regions of London, Liverpool, Birmingham and Dublin. In comparison this urban complexion is incredibly potent in Kipling's presentation of the soldier with a London dialect and description of leisure time spent in city theatres and pubs dominating the *BRB*.

Kipling's Tommy Atkins constitutes a grittier incarnation than the soldier of *ASL*. Housman's interpretation is rather closer to the Tommy would enlist in 1914. With Housman there is a sense, as portrayed in 'XXII The Lads in their Hundreds to Ludlow come in for the Fair', that in a small community one could (and would) survey the young men present and muse over which would eventually enlist. The impression is that any man could be a soldier and ipso-facto the soldier is an everyman. The sense of social isolation so strongly portrayed in Kipling does not feature in the same way and Housman appears to reject the traditional barrier between the civilian and military worlds.

Whilst both Kipling and Housman both offer sympathetic interpretations of the soldier and the army, Housman's efforts chime rather more closely with the perception

promoted by the War Office during the Cardwell-Childers Reforms and beyond in terms of the social inclusivity he portrayed. The hints of glory which characterise the early poems in *A Shropshire Lad* are rather more at odds with the War Office's strategy however, which sought to remove such sentiments as a means of recruiting and focus on the more practical appeals of the army as a career. Housman's later poems further remove him from the War Office ideal as his glorification of death, which is prevalent in 'I. 1887', 'III. The Recruit' and 'XXIII' becomes an uncomfortable mixture of self-awareness and fear later in the collection. Here the Housman and Kipling interpretations converge once again.

CONCLUSION

The War Office was in a position, to an extent, to create its own publicity about the soldier. Advertising and high profile schemes of reform could promote official perceptions. Once in the public domain, those ideas and schemes came under the scrutiny of the press but engagement continued with the army's official line. Beyond the press however, the soldier appeared in a variety of settings which contributed other interpretations and impressions of 'the soldier'. In literature, this chapter has considered one such form from which an impression of the soldier was created and exported, reflecting trends, tensions and pressures around his social status.

The literary interpretations of the British rank-and-file presented by Hardy, Kipling and Housman are only a small aspect of the perceptions of the soldier available to the British public. When examined alongside the outlook indicated by the press however, it is apparent that the broader shifts in civilian attitudes to the soldier are reflected in literature. The soldier is presented as peripheral to society in the poetry and prose

examined above, in much the same respect as he is in the newspaper. The military man is afforded a cautious curiosity; he has an innate exoticism about his character which rests tentatively between descent into an uncivilised state or ascent to join civilised society. He could go either way.

Each author reflects the public's relationship with the soldier, further illustrating the social and cultural transition presented in the earlier two chapters of Section II. Published in 1874, Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* displays the greatest suspicion of the soldier. The Cardwell Reforms were only beginning to raise awareness of the soldier's importance to the country at that time. Sergeant Troy is dashing and exudes a charm he derives from his military background. However, he is also destructive, uncivilised and peculiar when compared to the other male protagonists. His early appeal proves to be deceptive. Kipling's *Barrack Room Ballads* and *Soldiers Three* centre on the ordinary soldier almost exclusively and explore in particular life in the army and the soldier's experience. They correspond closely with the rise in public fascination with veteran biographies and serialised memoirs of the late-1880s and early-1890s. The latter-1890s, as Chapter 5 highlights, saw interest in military life diminish slightly but concern for the social position of the soldier increase. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* reflects the wider acceptance of the soldier which began to recognise him not only as a member of society but a product of it. *Housman* does not question the soldier's character but directs criticism at the nation and the army for the treatment and peril suffered by enlisted men.

The soldier in literature presents a further example of the manner in which the public viewed the soldier. The interpretations which emerged reflect the wider cultural and

social relationship with the military. They were not definitive however. As Section III will demonstrate, members of the military also sought to engage with the public in the discussion of their status and conditions, both challenging and at times supporting the civilian perceptions.

**SECTION III:
THE SOLDIER'S PERSPECTIVE**

CHAPTER SEVEN

PUBLIC THOUGHTS:

THE *BROAD ARROW*, A PAPER FOR THE SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

Section III will explore the image and identity of ‘the soldier’ from the perspective of the other ranks. It will seek to consider the attitudes and reactions of the privates and NCOs to the political reforms directed at aspects of their military lives and the public attention of which they were consistently the subject. Published memoirs give individual accounts of life in the army which will be explored in the forthcoming Chapter 8 and Chapter 9. National and local newspapers have offered the occasional reproduction of soldier’s letters in their columns, alongside transcripts of speeches from politicians and high ranking military officials, which offer further insight into the mind-set of the military man. What these resources do not show are the collected views and focussed commentary of serving and past members of the British Army and other individuals with a specialist interest in military affairs. Nor are they a medium which could claim to have been consumed specifically by a military readership. Chapter 7 will continue to explore the research questions addressed by Section II as a whole, using the specialist military periodical the *Broad Arrow* as a primary document to offer an insight into contemporary discourse surrounding the place and perspective of the soldier in Victorian Britain.

The *Broad Arrow: A Paper for the Services* was a weekly military periodical published in London from July 1868. A long-standing publication, it ran almost non-stop from its

inception until November 1917.¹ It was a bi-service newspaper intended principally for consumption by service personnel and a civilian readership with a specific interest in the military.² The *Broad Arrow* would appear to have secured some level of official sanction. Its namesake, the broad arrow, had been used to denote government property since the founding of the Office (later Board) of Ordnance in 1544. From 1855 the broad arrow was used to indicate British military equipment. Reproduction of the broad arrow symbol, which appeared as a banner on the front cover of the *Broad Arrow*, was made illegal without permission under Section 4 of the Public Stores Act in 1875.³

The legitimacy of the *Broad Arrow* is further indicated by the anonymity of its journalists and correspondents, suggesting that they may have been servicemen adhering to the prohibition on soldiers publicly discussing the army.⁴ There are also no names by which to identify its editors. The proprietors, bankers and Army, Navy and Civil Service agents Alexander and Tobias Gainsford Ridgway, are identified in several mainstream newspapers however. They are named in connection with libel charges relating to material published by the *Broad Arrow*.⁵ Although listed as ‘proprietors’ in

¹ The *Broad Arrow*, Colindale Newspaper Repository, The British Library, London.

² The proprietors, Alexander Ridgway and Tobias Gainsford Ridgway are listed as Army, Navy and Civil Service Agents Ridgway & Sons. They were also bankers and notaries and conveyancers.

³ Section 4, ‘Public Stores Act 1875’, www.legislation.gov.uk, [Accessed 10 Oct. 2013].

⁴ As with the military men writing to the mainstream press explored in chapters 4 and 5, individuals writing to the *Broad Arrow* identified themselves by their position in the army rather than by name, i.e. ‘An NCO’ or ‘An Army Surgeon’.

⁵ William Russell, the journalist and proprietor and editor of the *Army and Navy Gazette* and the Directors of the Army and Navy Stores won libel cases against the Ridgways in 1874 and 1881 respectively See: ‘Items of General News’ in *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronical* (14 Feb. 1874), issue 4330; ‘Law Intelligence: High Court of Justice: Queen’s Bench’ in *Reynold’s Newspaper* (6 February 1881), issue 1591; ‘The *Broad Arrow* Libel Case – Judgement’ in *The Pall Mall Gazette* (9 May 1881), issue 5056.

the news reports, theirs were the only two names identified, suggesting that, even if they were not the editors, the Ridgways were closely involved in the *Broad Arrow's* output.⁶

The language employed in the newspaper is on a par with that of the general press and its content is of equal sophistication. Literacy rates in the United Kingdom were rising rapidly by the 1880s; by 1900 literacy was almost universal.⁷ The same was true of the army. By the 1870s, most regiments offered, by way of recreation, a reading room and a library as well as remedial schooling. It is reasonable to presume that not all private soldiers would have had the inclination or ability to read the publication, however, the longevity of the *Broad Arrow* and its content suggest that it was consumed to a considerable degree by the other ranks. It was also available to purchase retail from booksellers and newsagents and wholesale from London. As a resource and as an insight into the stance of the soldier with regards to the changing world in which he existed, in Britain in particular, the *Broad Arrow* is invaluable.

The content of the *Broad Arrow* was largely topical. An advertisement introducing the periodical shortly after its launch described it as containing, 'Numerous articles on civil and military affairs, foreign policy, and other subjects interesting to the services of the country and the general reader'.⁸ It included commentaries on the British Army's administrative and domestic development; summaries of recent developments at the War Office and the Admiralty and wider national and international affairs; extracts from

⁶ Tobias Gainsford Ridgway was also convicted of bankruptcy in 1885. See 'Orders made on Applications for Discharge', in *London Gazette* (5 February 1886), issue 25556; 'Notices of Dividends', in *London Gazette* (26 December 1893), issue 26470.

⁷ W. P. Baker, *Parish Registers and Illiteracy in East Yorkshire* (York: East Yorkshire Local History Society, 1961).

⁸ 'The *Broad Arrow* is a weekly Newspaper of Thirty-Two Pages for the Military, Naval and Civil Services', in *A Practical Course of Military Surveying including the Principles of Topographical Drawing*, by Captain August Frédéric Lendy (London: Atchley, 1869), p.312.

the civilian press and from certain magazines such as *Fraser's* and *Blackwood's* on military topics; and weekly commentaries from the editor and a substantial section given over to letters submitted by serving and ex-soldiers and sailors. The *Broad Arrow* exposes some clear trends and patterns in its content with the reoccurrence of concerns and opinions. Moreover, it presents a source of commentary which closely followed contemporary political and military activity.

The proprietors established the politics and principles of the *Broad Arrow* clearly in its original advertisement, proclaiming the periodical to be neither neutral nor independent but impartial in its support of any class. The *Broad Arrow's* unpartisan position was strongly asserted. It 'supports those in authority', the advert claimed, but is 'not actuated by a desire to please those who possess power and therefore will continue to comment freely upon what may appear to call for public criticism'.⁹ Equally, it announced that the paper will advocate, 'the interests of those who are placed under command but... has no desire to curry favour with the many either for profit or popularity and will not hesitate to condemn what may appear unjust claims or complaints'.¹⁰

Given the specialist readership of the *Broad Arrow*, the perspectives and preoccupations expressed within were that of soldiers and sailors, not civilian spectators.¹¹ In fact, a central and frequent topic of discussion and complaint was the place of the military in

⁹ 'The *Broad Arrow* is a Weekly Newspaper', p. 312.

¹⁰ 'The *Broad Arrow* is a Weekly Newspaper', p. 312.

¹¹ The *Broad Arrow* quickly became an influential periodical. It would be referenced in connection with military topics in the general press and its articles were reproduced in other specialist military interest publications both within Britain and overseas. For details of the *Broad Arrow's* use in the *Canadian Military Gazette* see James A. Wood, *Militia Myths: Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier 1896-1921* (Vancouver, Toronto: UBC Press. 2010).

public life and the prejudices and disadvantages it faced. The 1869 introductory advertisement announced:

The *Broad Arrow* desires to see the Army and Navy as the regular forces of the country as equal in efficiency to any other service in the world. And this it believes can be affected not through their depreciation by the ignorant, not by their pretend reform through the corrupt and interested but by the will of the nation unmistakably declared in favour of justice to the services, and inexorably demanding from them in return the efficient service they will be bound to render.¹²

Sections I and II have presented the development of a movement of reform which led by the War Office sought to redefine military service and challenge the British civilian perception of the ordinary soldier. Chapter 4 in particular demonstrated how those reforms were received in the public arena and how the image and identity of the soldier gained increasing cultural and social currency as a result of and in addition to the Government's efforts. The *Broad Arrow* represents the counter to those perspectives. It presents an official account (official on an institutional basis) and an internal perspective – the observations of the soldier from within the army. As a source, the *Broad Arrow* has not been utilised to this extent before. Indeed, current historiography on the late-Victorian army and British soldiers in the nineteenth century is yet to make full use of the military newspaper.

The Victorian press in general is only just beginning to receive extensive attention from scholars; until the digitisation of the newspaper archives the material was generally acknowledged as too vast to utilise successfully. For the military publications, national, local and wartime, the wait may be a little longer as the majority have not as yet been

¹² 'The *Broad Arrow* is a Weekly Newspaper', p.312.

included in Gale Cengage's projects. Despite this obstacle however, the *Broad Arrow* remains a valuable and exciting resource.

Chapter 7 will readdress the issues of reform and the social position examined in Section II, this time from the perspective of the soldiers themselves. The weekly edition of the *Broad Arrow* maintained a core focus on the political developments affecting the army. An entirely military enterprise, combined with other commentaries and the publication of soldiers' letters, the discussions presented by the newspaper are rooted firmly in the army domain. They will highlight how close the civil and military perspectives were as the *Broad Arrow* indicates that the military men, despite being the subject of review and reform, actually subscribed to the consensus that the measures were necessary. The soldiers' opposition is directed more against civilian ignorance and prejudice than against political interference.

THE *BROAD ARROW* AND THE REFORMS

The *Broad Arrow* featured regular commentary on the political and administrative background of the army. The Cardwell-Childers Reforms and the long running debate over military reform of which they were the product, received close attention. The newspaper relayed to its readership a variety of angles on their introduction and development. There were accounts of recent or current developments as well as opinion pages and a strong reliance on letters from readers. This combination presents a clear running commentary which provides a valuable insight into the 'internal' opinions and perspectives of the military in light of the Cardwell-Childers Reforms and beyond. Those opinions remained tempered, displaying general support for the efforts of the

War Office, though reminiscent of the general press, voicing various specific concerns over issues such as localisation and the endangerment of regimental *esprit de corps*.

The *Broad Arrow*'s regular and detailed engagement with the reforms does suggest that the measures and reforms had both a marked following and support. As it was argued in Section I, the significance of the 'Childers Reforms' and the preceding and subsequent debate around the rehabilitation of the soldier lay not necessarily in the actions which were ultimately taken but in part in the constant and pronounced presence they encouraged. Questions of recruiting, modernisation, public image and social integration were of current and significant importance to the military in Britain as the *Broad Arrow* demonstrates. And the schemes were generally well received according to the written summaries which followed. Certain issues were questioned, such as the recruiting age being fixed at nineteen not twenty years, and the loss of coloured lapels and cuffs, known as facings, which helped to identify individual regiments, especially when serving overseas. There was, however, no outright opposition.¹³

The politicians more generally were praised for their actions at the War Office, even if their schemes encouraged a mixed reception. Childers was commended for removing cross-posting on the advice of Lord Roberts that the practice damaged *esprit de corps* in the regimental system and for conducting an enquiry into the seemingly high suicide rate among serving British soldiers.¹⁴ He was congratulated for alleviating the recruiting crisis – something, it was claimed, his predecessors had failed to accomplish.¹⁵

¹³ The *Broad Arrow* (June 1881), p.863.

¹⁴ The *Broad Arrow* (February 1881), p. 613; (October 1881), p. 517.

¹⁵ The *Broad Arrow* (February 1881), p. 829.

The *Broad Arrow* followed closely the debate of army reform, not simply in the measures which were introduced but also the research which was conducted during the interval. The report of the Airey Committee for instance, which was appointed in 1879 and published in 1880, was summarised for its readers in the *Broad Arrow*. Published in March 1880, the article provided a detailed summary of the committee's findings, quoting directly passages of significance and summarising recommendations made on various issues. The level of significance given to the report's findings suggests that it was perceived as a major review, primarily of the Cardwell Reforms and their progress after a decade of maturing.

Furthermore, criticism of the reforms, and especially the impact of short service and localisation were openly highlighted and the committee's recommendations stated. Home battalions, the *Broad Arrow* reported, had become nurseries for young soldiers and the linked battalions were damaging *esprit de corps*. It stated that Lord Airey and his committee recommended that linked battalions, brigade depots and regimental depots be abolished. 'One fact has been made clear by the researchers of the committee', the report stated, 'and that is that the present system, among its short comings, gives us weak regiments of very young soldiers and has failed to give us the reserve it promised.'¹⁶ The *Broad Arrow's* response to the Airey report in 1880 indicates growing reservations within the military, including the rank-and-file, over the suitability and success of Cardwell's schemes. This closely reflected the general public's concern over the efficiency of the army. The *Broad Arrow* appeared appreciative of the final address of their concerns made by Airey's committee.

¹⁶ The *Broad Arrow* (March 1880), pp. 373-374.

In March 1881, the Airey Report featured again in the *Broad Arrow*, this time with a particular focus on recruiting.¹⁷ A full summary was provided. Far from presenting a conservative support of the status quo, it highlighted how the committee advocated an entire reorganisation of the recruiting system with the appointment of a director and a clear statement setting forth the advantages of service with the army. All schemes considered by Lord Airey, basic and outlandish, were reproduced in the report as well as the general suggestions for reorganisation. Checks against fraudulent enlistment, for example, were explored in detail and various solutions outlined in the report, including marking recruits by vaccination in such a way, ‘as to be easily discovered by the surgeon at his medical examination.’¹⁸ This notion at least seemed to have captured the readers’ imagination as it appeared in letters to the editor on several occasions as a preferred solution. Section I demonstrated that far more of the recommendations of the Taylor, Armstrong and Airey Committees were attempted than previously thought, especially during the Childers years. What the *Broad Arrow* demonstrates is that the on-going debate which carried and urged forward the reforms to the army was engaged with by every level in the military system. The soldiers themselves were aware of the recommendations of the Royal Commissions and for the most part, they agreed with them.

The initiatives and reforms introduced by the War Office did not meet with universal approval. As well as criticism from official sources such as the Airey Commission, the *Broad Arrow* also published criticism from military sources, including servicemen themselves. In 1882 for example, an ‘ex-Lance Corporal’ submitted a letter to the editor

¹⁷ The *Broad Arrow* (March 1881), p.836.

¹⁸ The *Broad Arrow* (March 1881), p.837.

entitled 'Short Service Men'.¹⁹ The old soldier describes an instance in which the system of short service had failed him: he had been denied back-dated pay as a lance-corporal when he returned from active service because he was only short service and was almost due transfer to the Reserves. Many men, the contributor states, would still be serving with the colours were they treated fairly and justly; they were not. He blames regimental commanding officers and the system for not ensuring all men received what they earned. Notably, the author is unwilling to direct blame at Cardwell or the Duke of Cambridge, whom he believes had not envisaged such problems and would certainly now disapprove. This complaint is of particular relevance as it highlights a source of one of the key failings of the short-service system – the loss of good men to the Reserves when they would have been valuable NCOs. The shortfalls of the military reform were discussed openly, as were the successes.

Overall however, the *Broad Arrow* shows clear support for reform. The issues the War Office sought to address were also identified by the publication as problems. In an article entitled 'Political Gratitude for Army Reform', reform was described as 'a great and good thing'. Colonel Barnes, a Member of Parliament from Suffolk, was criticised for calls he had made in parliament for further military reform; the article claimed that it was hard to see what more could be done. They expressed sympathy and even gratitude for the work undertaken by Childers and supported his efforts.²⁰

A frequent and particularly pertinent subject for the *Broad Arrow* was the territorial system and the impact on the regiment, particularly in the infantry. The reforms received

¹⁹ 'Short Service Men', *The Broad Arrow* (April 1882), p.443.

²⁰ *The Broad Arrow* (March 1882), p.265.

considerable criticism from all sides, particularly for the lamented loss of regimental numbers and facings which had served as identification for almost a century. This criticism was coupled with further questions over the success of short service. It was a matter of ‘widespread concern’ in the army. Several letters and articles note that, ‘all military men agree that the present system is highly to be deplored’.²¹ Childers was commended in the February of 1881 for abolishing cross-posting and highlighted the damage to regimental *esprit de corps* the system had caused. ‘It is not advantageous to move a soldier from one regiment to another’, one letter argued, ‘seeing as they are attached by feeling of *esprit de corps*...to the local character of the regiment.’²²

It was the highly subjective nature of the regiment, however, which meant that territorialisation was one of the main subjects over which there was limited consensus. In January 1882 the *Broad Arrow* published an article defending the reforms, condemning the claims of its critics as ‘superficial and ill-informed’:

While...the success of the short-service system may yet be doubtful, that of the territorial system is assured. It is not many years ago that the difficulty in obtaining recruits was so great a recurrence to compulsory service was seriously contemplated...There existed a strong prejudice against soldiering amongst the recruit giving classes...This unsatisfactory state of things continued long after the conditions of service were materially improved. It may be said that far the last twelve years soldiering has compared favourably with many of the callings of civil life; but although the prejudices against enlistment has been abating, it has, we believe, only been in the last year that the army has become a really popular trade and that an ample supply of recruits has been forthcoming.²³

The author attributed much of this success to the localisation of the regiments, suggesting that local country affiliation had proved very popular and that in some

²¹ The *Broad Arrow* (June 1881), p.741.

²² The *Broad Arrow* (February 1881), p.250.

²³ The *Broad Arrow* (February 1881) p.69.

instances applicants had been rejected because the regiment was full. The *Broad Arrow* addressed the issue briefly again in 1890 in an article entitled 'Progress in the Army'. Localisation, it concluded, had not worked as well as it had been hoped. The home battalion, it suggested did not spend enough time in the territorial district to foster a sufficiently high level of local affinity. With respect to the issue of *esprit de corps*, however, the article claimed that the linked battalions which now formed the amalgamated regiments were now 'happy'.²⁴

In the long-term, the reforms to the regiments received mixed reviews. An awareness of the need to improve the army's public image and reform recruiting was not confined to the political and military chiefs. The *Broad Arrow* published several articles and letters discussing the need for professional recruiting and traced developments from the War Office as they were revealed. In January 1880, an article entitled 'Recruits and Recruiters' discussed the progress made in recruiting since the Cardwell Reforms a decade earlier. It was supportive of the increasingly reformed system of direct and professional recruiting, but accused recruiting officers of continuing with their deceitful and immoral methods, which it claimed continued to present a major contributor to the recruiting crisis:

While conditions of service have been changed and an entirely different class of men is offering for enlistment, the recruiting sergeants persevere in their old system of false promises and false statements. ..The authorities themselves, it must be admitted, are averse to misleading the public. The Conditions of Service in the army have been drawn up in a concise form, and have been generally circulated in the country...They may not be too liberal but they are unquestionably fair. A man obtains food, shelter and some pocket money in exchange for the services he renders...The recruiting sergeants persist, however, in their exaggerated

²⁴ The *Broad Arrow* (March 1890), pp. 353-354.

statements, which, now that they are not believed by one recruit in fifty, are as silly as they are wrong.²⁵

The article does not shy away from criticising the recent calibre of men joining the army and suggesting that the quality could be improved further. The need for recruiting is identified as a vital part of the army organisation.

It was clearly acknowledged in the *Broad Arrow* that recruiting required attention and the newspaper freely encouraged measures intended to raise the social standard of the army, something its readers did not openly object to either. The initiatives introduced by the War Office did meet with criticism and scrutiny however. The supposed success the recruiting service had enjoyed since the Cardwell Reforms was questioned in 1880 in light of current recruiting trends. In a letter to the editor entitled 'The Queen's Hard Bargain', the *Broad Arrow's* previously optimistic account of recruiting at that time was brought into question. The government's attempts to legitimise recruitment by removing shallow inducements to enlist had deterred many men and damaged recruiting.²⁶ More generally, the merits of the Cardwell and later the Childers Reforms in modernising the recruiting service were considered and relayed back to the readers. The *Broad Arrow* would seem to approve of the direction which was taken:

The recruiting classes have not...fully appreciated the advantages of enlistment; and Mr Childers, in authorising the issue of the [recruiting] pamphlet...has sought to publish them to the community in a popular form. Hitherto the public houses of the country have been the recruiting agencies. Mr Childers thinks that the Post Offices may be more advantageously utilised. The idea is a good one, and in the hands of General Bulwer, who as Inspector of Recruiting would deal with the subject, is likely to lead a wholesome reform of the recruiting system.²⁷

²⁵ The *Broad Arrow* (January 1880), pp.131-32.

²⁶ The *Broad Arrow* (February 1880), p.176.

²⁷ The *Broad Arrow* (September 1881), p.311.

Along with the War Office, the *Broad Arrow* also perceived poor methods of recruiting as key in the low quantity and quality of recruits the British Army was receiving and saw greater levels of knowledge about what the army had to offer as a suitable solution. The periodical was not one-sided in its appraisal of the reforms however. It could be highly critical of individual schemes, even if there was agreement over the necessity of their introduction. The *Advantages of the Army* recruiting pamphlet came under particular scrutiny. The elderly Field-Marshal Lord Strathnairn, for instance, openly accused the pamphlet of misleading soldiers over the terms of eligibility for an army pension. Lord Strathnairn's criticism was serious for a scheme principally aimed at eradicating deceit in military recruitment. It was not the only such issue to be raised. Although an improvement on the recruiting sergeant's yarn the pamphlet still presented, many argued, an overly rosy view of the army with pay and diet especially exaggerated to appeal.

Overall, the newspaper supported the work of the War Office in modernising army recruiting. According to the *Broad Arrow*, the War Office had enjoyed some success in its attempts to popularise the army, although other factors had worked in recruiting's favour:

For many years there was a prejudice against soldiering, which the improvement in conditions for enlisting failed to remove. By degrees however, this prejudice has waned, until the army has at length come to be regarded as a calling which no respectable youth need be ashamed to adopt. What has brought this about may be difficult to prove. No doubt better pay has had something to do with it; but short service must likewise have had its effect in popularising the army; while better education has enabled the recruit-giving classes to appreciate the many substantial advantages which enlistment secures.²⁸

²⁸ The *Broad Arrow* (November 1881), p.651.

Even short service, which received the most consistent criticism for its effect on the average age of the soldier, was acknowledged to have had a positive impact in terms of numbers of recruits. This increase in recruiting intake was also attributed to the increased advantages of the army, the removal of prejudices against soldiering. Childers was personally recognised as a successful minister who had maintained the army to establishment.²⁹

Interest in the progress of recruiting following the introduction of the War Office's schemes continued long after the initial plans were announced. By 1890s, the debate had acquired a reflective stance, as commentators sought to appraise the reforms of a decade earlier. Two schools of thought continued to exist: the 'conservative' and the 'progressive', both of which offered their own perspectives on the progress the army had made, however, the general consensus as the *Broad Arrow* put it, was that the army's efficiency had improved. Localisation and short service had still not gained universal approval, with some arguing that regiments did not spend long enough in their home counties and those which did were populated by youths. However, soldiers who had served five to six years abroad, *The Broad Arrow* argued, were now strong, reliable and well educated men. Growing public interest in the army had not escaped the notice of *The Broad Arrow* writers. Their 1890 review of the army's progress was prefaced as a question which they claim arose frequently when conversing with civilians who 'wish to post themselves properly on a subject which so often comes under discussion.'³⁰

²⁹ *The Broad Arrow* (May 1882), p.565.

³⁰ *The Broad Arrow* (March 1890), pp.353-354.

The *Broad Arrow* examined various perspectives on the best way to popularise the military in Britain. Some arguments advocated a major redefining of the military ethos and what it meant to enlist. Lt. Col. Aubrey Maud, for example, had recently published a pamphlet, 'A Plea for the Private' which *The Broad Arrow* discussed at length. In the pamphlet the author had promoted two key changes: the abolition of fixed service allowing men to enlist and dismiss themselves when they wished, submitting one month's notice; and the adoption of a system of discipline based on fines and dismissal akin to that used by the Police Force. Aspects of the Colonel's suggestions were not entirely original.³¹

The Airey Committee had recommended a decade earlier that the police's style of discipline should be partially adopted. Dismissal for serious crimes should be favoured over military prison, they had argued, as retaining offenders helped to compound the perception that the army was populated by criminals. They found it discouraged men from joining if they thought they would have to associate with such individuals. Moreover, as Colonel Aubrey Maud pointed out, the prospect of strict and sometimes harsh military discipline was a key deterrent to many men intrigued by active service but too attached to their civil liberties. 'We, whose army must live on the voluntary recruit', he claimed, 'must attune our discipline to the customs and ideas of the nation, else failure, as at present, can alone attend us.'³²

The *Broad Arrow* outlined the competition the army faced for physically fit young men of recruiting age. The police, the railways, the GPO and the docks were all in direct

³¹ The *Broad Arrow* (May 1890), p.550.

³² The *Broad Arrow* (May 1890), p.550.

competition for the class and type of man the War Office wished to entice. If the army were to coax men away from such professions which, even with short service taken into account, asked of a man some of the most important years of his life restricting the basic liberties civilians took for granted and sent a man abroad for years at a time, the recompense would have to be considerable. Pay, the article stated, was still not sufficient to be competitive with other employers in the labour market. Furthermore, the removal of a young man from the British employment market at the point where he would normally settle on his profession and refine his trade placed pressure on the government to ensure there was a place for him when he completed his period of military service.

The Broad Arrow did not agree with this stance however. It was necessary for men to remain in the army for set periods it argued to prevent them taking leave on tours of duty or to avoid being drafted altogether – the cost of transporting them alone would be too high. The strict and fastidious code of discipline was also necessary due to the close living conditions in which the men existed. The periodical did not subscribe to the recommendations made in ‘A Plea to the Private’ but it published and discussed its argument nonetheless. Its readership were kept abreast of the arguments circulating about military recruiting and popularization and informed of both the state and individual schemes being touted.

SOLDIERS ON THE BRITISH PUBLIC

The *Broad Arrow* could address a range of issues affecting the British military. As such, the discussions it contains relate to matters not only of weaponry, tactics, strategy and world/imperial affairs but also social and political concerns closer to home. The

newspaper presents an overlooked resource valuable for exploring the military's reaction to the social and political climate in which it existed. Opinions and perspectives were openly expressed in light of the activities at the War Office and the on-going question of recruitment. The *Broad Arrow* also offers an insight through which it is possible to explore the nature and extent of soldiers' awareness of the public's attitude towards the army and also internally, the soldiers' estimation of themselves.

Increasingly, the army was recognising the need to rely on the British public's good will and support. As a result, the presence and nature of the army in public discourse became of increasing importance to the *Broad Arrow*, as did attitudes of the public towards soldiers and the military cause. Despite the efforts of the War Office to improve the way in which soldiers were perceived, attitudes were slow to change. The government was accused of failing to deliver on the promises of social rehabilitation which had been made since the late-1860s; the public too was criticised for its uncharitable and prejudiced attitudes.

The *Broad Arrow* demonstrates an awareness amongst soldiers of the way in which they were viewed by the civilian world and they were not reticent in voicing their displeasure. In the case of the employment of reservists for instance, attacks on the public shared a voice with both the common soldiers and the political and military chiefs. Dubbing it 'money grabbing patriotism', the War Office in March 1890 had complained that employers were refusing to employ men from the Reserves. Businesses were not obliged to take veterans and many were too selfish, it was argued, to do so and risk their workforce depleting in the event of a national emergency. The article itself

conveys considerable feeling in both content and tone. The other option, the author noted, was conscription and the public wouldn't care for that either.³³

The *Broad Arrow* presents an on-going and often contradictory debate over the popularisation of the soldier. Frequently, the publication addressed both the question of military reform and also the nature of the debate in non-military circles. Reflecting a similar pattern of intensification apparent in the wider civilian press, as identified in Chapter 4, the tone of the *Broad Arrow's* reporting on the topic of military social status darkened to reveal an increasing sense of annoyance, frustration and intolerance on the part of the army and its soldiers. One article published in January 1890 tackled the issue directly as it questioned whether the attentions the army had been receiving in recent years from the War Office and the on-looking public amounted to reform or abuse. 'It seems almost impossible', the author complained, 'for any civilian to criticise the army of this country, or propose any scheme of military reform without previously showering the most virulent abuse upon everyone constituting that army.'³⁴

The level of offence communicated in the course of the lengthy article was acute, personal and expressed on behalf of every member of the army. Such abuse was, 'lavished upon the Army of the Queen collectively and individually', the author declared. Would-be reformers asserted with confidence that the rank-and-file were the 'scum of the earth' who had enlisted through desperation and subsequently pursued the single objective of releasing themselves from the army's grasp as soon as possible. 'The next step', the same article complained, was 'to take the other end of the stick in hand

³³ The *Broad Arrow* (March 1890), p.330.

³⁴ The *Broad Arrow* (January 1890), p.33.

and, having made a pretence of critically examining it, to lay it down, equally dogmatically, that officers are ignorant, lazy and keen only upon doing that work which the devil provides for all idle people.³⁵

The open and scathing attack on the less charitable attitudes expressed by the public in the January of 1890 concluded that, invariably, the numerous military successes enjoyed by the British Army were over looked and the system of personal development and education offered to its men was ignored. The author questioned why such individuals did not volunteer themselves and expressed regret at how their ‘wasted courage and virility must seek outlet in the riots, strikes, processions and conjugal [activities].’³⁶

A further article to ‘Reform or Abuse’ published one month later highlighted the hypocrisy and ignorance behind much of the criticism directed at the army. The piece focused on Sir Edward Sullivan (1852 – 1928), the son of the late Irish Lord Chancellor and respected barrister Sir Edward Sullivan (1822 – 1885) who had recently sought to praise the reputation of postal workers and policemen while simultaneously, it was alleged, depreciating that of soldiers. He was mistaken in his zeal, the article declared, since many policemen and postal workers were themselves ex-soldiers.³⁷ Increasingly, the *Broad Arrow* openly criticised what it regarded as abuse of the military system and its personnel.

³⁵ The *Broad Arrow* (January 1890), p.33.

³⁶ The *Broad Arrow* (January 1890), p.33.

³⁷ The *Broad Arrow* (February 1890), p.135.

The military voice, as it was expressed in the newspaper, increasingly criticised the constant poor publicity and scrutiny to which the army was subjected by the public and the impact it had on efficiency and morale. The accusations even began to reverse the traditional flow of disapproval, reflecting ever more negatively on the British public as the source of the poor specimens of men turning out to enlist. In August 1890, an article was published in which modern industry was blamed for an unhealthy population making soldiers hard to select. Once again it was argued that for the army to improve, it had to be promoted that the army offered a career which improved, not degraded, the individual man.³⁸

What the *Broad Arrow* also indicates, however, is a growing awareness within the military of the necessity for the army to moderate the image it conveyed to the outside world. The War Office certainly had grasped the importance of public image in the success of recruitment and civil-military relations, as the political movement to reform had demonstrated. It becomes evident that the soldiers themselves shared in the opinion that unsavoury perceptions held by the public of the army could be improved, or reinforced, by the actions and activities in which soldiers were seen to indulge. Where inward criticism arose, it was primarily directed against an alleged minority of members of the rank-and-file accused of damaging the potential for good reputation among the majority. However, the treatment of soldiers by civilians specifically was identified as a fundamental factor in determining the outward image the army projected.

On various occasions methods for encouraging improvement to recruiting were discussed in the the *Broad Arrow* and frequently the need for better conditions was cited

³⁸ The *Broad Arrow* (August 1890), p.250.

as an important element. This was partly to be achieved through increased pay, as one article published in March 1880 suggested, although it was acknowledged that a large proportion would be wasted on drink. The other suggestion was the relaxation of discipline as a means of encouraging respectable and ambitious young men to enlist. Since trade was up and recruiting down (in the spring of 1880), the article argued, it was necessary to make the army a more appealing and competitive option.³⁹ The image of the undervalued and browbeaten soldier, a potentially traditional perception, suggested the career offered little reward and was poorly respected. Clearly the soldiers themselves were able to recognise the importance of such an image being erased from the public's mind.

The issue of discipline was raised again in an article published in January 1882. The image of the army had been damaged by the recent closure of several military prisons and the failed introduction of one large central establishment. The proportions of military prisoners in civil gaols, both as a result of the military prison closures and the 1880 revisions which introduced retention in civil prisons for long term offences, meant that the stereotype that the army was fed by the criminal classes was being vindicated. The proportion of crimes had risen, argued the author, as a result of short-service men who were younger, more numerous and more prone to dishonesty. However, the presence of soldiers in civilian prisons and the relatively minor nature of military crimes in comparison with civilian ones was helping to reinforce the bad stereotypes, not dispel them. 'For nothing seems more likely to discredit the force and make men shrink from entering it', claimed the article, 'than finding some little breach in military law, which

³⁹ The *Broad Arrow* (March 1880), p.300.

would go unpunished in civil life, renders them liable to all the disgrace which properly attaches to the gaol bird.⁴⁰

The growing awareness within the military of the political and social climate in which the army existed is evidenced in the increasing frequency with which the question of public opinion with regards to the army appeared in the *Broad Arrow*. Moreover, the willingness to address and respond to incidents of attack on the army indicates an increasingly strong opinion within the military as to their own worth and a rejection of the received public stereotypes. This was most strongly demonstrated in the instances when direct attacks on the army's integrity or examples of individual persecution on soldiers were discussed and condemned in the *Broad Arrow*. Frequently, this defence of the army was led by senior officers and in some cases the War Office. The efforts of the individuals with power and influence to protect soldiers and the military institution were reproduced with interest for the readers of the publication.

Addressing one of the most common and derogatory examples of prejudice soldiers faced in Britain, the *Broad Arrow* reported the efforts of Colonel Milne-Home to obtain comment from the Home Secretary Sir William Harcourt on a soldier being refused entry to a public place, namely a pub, in Winchester. Harcourt had responded with the rather uninspiring assertion that while the innkeeper's conduct was not justifiable by law, he could not be compelled to allow entry to every room in the hotel.⁴¹ Importantly however, the issue of public prejudice was raised by a senior army officer and

⁴⁰ The *Broad Arrow* (January 1882), pp. 111-112.

⁴¹ The *Broad Arrow* (May 1882), p.583.

condemned, however mildly, by a senior politician and reproduced in the popular military periodical for members of every strata of the army to read.

Open prejudice against soldiers was becoming less acceptable. The opposition expressed in the *Broad Arrow*, however, pre-dates considerably references to the unacceptability of discrimination against the soldier made by the civilian press and the War Office (present in the Wantage Committee report). Whilst the wider civilian and political worlds came to recognise and seek to reject act of public prejudice by the early 1890s, the military world was already developing an opposition as early as 1881.

It was not uncommon for high ranking officers to publically defend the army. The Wantage Committee advocated an increasing intolerance of discrimination against the army in 1891, however, there had been elements of public opposition to attacks on the military for some time. Such instances varied from the condemnation of attacks upon soldiers themselves, such as the barring of uniformed men from public places, to allegations of considerable seriousness against the army itself. Instances of the latter had the potential to damage its reputation greatly. This was the case when in February 1880 the *Broad Arrow* published a report disputing accusations of atrocities committed by the army in South Africa and Afghanistan. Generals Roberts and Wolseley had reportedly written to the Houses of Parliament to dispute claims made by the journalist and war correspondent Dr W. H. Russell. According to Dr Russell, the *Broad Arrow* reported;

The wounded were said to be killed for sheer sportiveness, Private Thomas Atkins was described as mutilating dead Afghans... Her Majesty's subjects must have thought the British Army had utterly taken leave of its civilisation, had parted with every rag of chivalry, had thrown

discipline to the winds and had begun to emulate the peculiar and wayward virtues of the Bashi Bazouks and the Tekke Turcomans.⁴²

Instead Wolseley, with whom Russell had travelled when following the British Army in South Africa, and Roberts maintained that the opposite was in fact true and the *Broad Arrow* repeated the accusation that the war correspondent had exaggerated his claims and could be proved to be false. Wolseley in fact harboured a long-term dislike of Russell; the pair would cross paths frequently over British military policy.⁴³

The *Broad Arrow* claimed that the ‘mawkish spirit of humanitarianism’ was pursuing the army. In the article the *Broad Arrow* further criticised the treatment of the British soldier at the hands of the public:

It is evident from what we have seen and heard lately that our troops have not only to share the perils of the field, but must also be prepared to suffer the attacks of coffee room critics and people who have never seen war out of a panorama.⁴⁴

The preconceptions and prejudices of the public were again raised and criticised by the authors of the *Broad Arrow* suggesting that soldiers faced difficult conditions when on duty and did not deserve to be attacked by ignorant civilians on their return home. Considering the wide readership of the *Broad Arrow*, such sentiments would have been consumed and in many cases shared by soldiers of potentially every rank in the British Army.

⁴² The *Broad Arrow* (February 1880), pp.236-237.

⁴³ R. T. Stearn, ‘Russell, Sir William Howard (1820-1907)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, October 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35889>, accessed 20 Oct. 2015].

⁴⁴ The *Broad Arrow* (February 1880), pp.236-237.

Soldiers were both aware of the interest their profession held in the public domain and of the opinions which were shared therein. In many cases, the individual contributors to the *Broad Arrow* appeared to at least in part share the concerns of the public. Efficiency could be improved they argued and more could be done to ensure the side of the army the public saw was a favourable one. Criticism was not necessarily welcome, but nor did the newspaper appear to promote the idea of a perfect army.

Furthermore, the *Broad Arrow* demonstrates how the discussion of military reform was not limited to the War Office and internal and external civil and military circles. One article published in March 1890 considered the changes made to the army over the preceding decade and the work still to be done in the context of the questions soldiers were often asked by civilians, such as, “Has the army materially improved during the last ten years?”⁴⁵

It is not easy to gauge from the *Broad Arrow* precisely how the military community perceived the civilian world’s perception of them. There appear frequent and contradictory reports which alternated freely between the idea that the public was improving in its opinion of the soldier and that it was not. Overwhelmingly, the measures of the War Office to improve the army’s relationship with the British public, to rehabilitate the image it broadcast and to encourage a higher class of recruit met with approval. This in itself seemed to encourage optimism in the newspaper’s estimation of developments, demonstrating for its editors and authors that progress had been made towards the eventual popularisation of the army amongst respectable working-class communities.

⁴⁵ The *Broad Arrow* (March 1890), p.185.

Nevertheless, that soldiers experienced criticism and sporadic examples of discrimination in public throughout the late-nineteenth century to an extent accounts for the inconsistencies of the *Broad Arrow* over an extended period. The newspaper presents no discernible trend in which the relationship between the public and the army is seen to improve. Instead articles bemoan the treatment of soldiers at the hand of the public as frequently as they celebrate the progress which had been made in raising the army's profile and making anti-soldier sentiments a thing of the past. While recruiting had been of sufficient quality and quantity in recent years, the *Broad Arrow* argued in 1881, it was not abundant and the supply would not be sufficient to meet any exceptional requirements.⁴⁶

This relatively optimistic perspective was favourable to the current condition of the military's relationship with the British public. This was rather at odds with a letter which was published just three months later which bemoaned the poor attitude the British 'nation of shopkeepers' displayed towards soldiers, especially when they were discharged. The authors were different, as was the source, one an article and the other a letter from a veteran soldier, however, the disparity in perspective indicates both a variation in opinion in the military community and a sufficient complexity in the question of military popularisation for the same periodical to publish opposing arguments in quick succession.

The military were conscious of both the progress that had been made in popularising the army and the work which still needed to be done. As chapters 5 and 6 have identified in

⁴⁶ The *Broad Arrow* (November 1881), p.651.

the wider press, the shift in public perceptions and attitudes concerning the soldier was a gradual process influenced by a variety of sources. The *Broad Arrow* engaged in the debate from both military and civilian perspectives and considered carefully the implications of the impression the public gained of the army by way of its conduct, appearance and lifestyle.. As it surmised for its readers in May 1890, ‘we whose army must live on the voluntary recruit, must attune our discipline to the custom and ideas of the nation, else failure, as at present, can only attend’.⁴⁷

SOLDIERS ON ‘THE SOLDIER’

In addition to offering an indication as to the nature of the response to public praise and criticism the army may have wished to express, the *Broad Arrow* has further value in offering the opportunity to explore the perspectives of the soldiers themselves. Being a publication aimed at members of the British armed forces and relying on serving and veteran soldiers and sailors for large proportions of its material, the *Broad Arrow* presents an interesting insight into the military man’s attitudes, not only with regards to the public and the War Office but also reflections on himself and his comrades.

The *Broad Arrow* regularly considered the status of the soldier and his development socially and with regards to military efficiency. The opinions expressed on the topic had a variety of origins varying from personal experience and official military reports to opinions based on the on-going developments from the War Office. The question of whether the army was improving, materially or morally, was of interest to the publication’s military readership. The conclusions drawn were inconsistent. For the most part, the attitude was notably positive. The majority of entries offered the

⁴⁷ The *Broad Arrow* (May 1890), p.550.

impression that the social status of the soldier showed progress. There were instance of complaint, usually directed at the ‘system’, for example the process of passing men onto an employment register to assist with their future after discharge. There was a general consensus in the articles and letters appearing in the *Broad Arrow*, however, that there was improvement to be made.

The *Broad Arrow* questioned whether there could be said to have been a social transition in the ranks of the army. Following the publication of ‘*Six Months in the Ranks*’, or *The Gentleman Private* by E. C. Grenville Murray in January 1882, the newspaper highlighted the opportunities the army offered for ‘gifted but poor young men who couldn’t afford the education to be eligible for a commission’ from the outset.⁴⁸ The experiences of Grenville Murray, a man of good social standing serving in the rank-and-file, were presented as a demonstration of the advantages a military career could offer to ambitious young men of any class. This, the *Broad Arrow* suggested, might even indicate a period social transformation in the ranks.

This positive perspective echoed sentiments expressed two years earlier when the *Broad Arrow*, reviewing the Army Estimates in March 1880, surmised that according to the recent reports, ‘it appears we are obtaining a better class of recruits’.⁴⁹ The forthcoming changes Childers was preparing in respect to the recruiting service appeared to encourage further optimism as its professionalization was noted to promise to ‘raise still further the moral standard of our recruits’.⁵⁰ It is notable how clearly the intimation that improvement was needed and welcome was made. The language expressed in the *Broad*

⁴⁸ The *Broad Arrow* (January 1882), p.74.

⁴⁹ The *Broad Arrow* (March 1880), p.334.

⁵⁰ The *Broad Arrow* (March 1880), p.334.

Arrow's report did not specify particular sections of the army as at fault, nor any particular trait or vices. What it did indicate was that the moral standard of recruits was under revision and therefore standards were not as high as they might be. By the mid-1890s, the perceived necessity continued to be one of gradual social improvement, with increasing numbers of men from the respectable working class enlisting, bolstered by a small influx of middle-class men hoping to reach NCO and Warrant Officer status and gain a pension.⁵¹

Further to discussions over the social complexion and moral standing of men serving with the colours, the *Broad Arrow* also reflected more broadly on the motivation of the men enlisting to be soldiers after 1870 and their background. Overwhelmingly, the argument was that pay, pension and other remuneration were key to the army's appeal. This was challenged on occasion. 'Active service has always been the biggest incentive for men to enlist', claimed one article published in March 1881, 'the promise of war has brought more men to the colours than that of money; men do not sign up for financial rewards such as deferred pay but to fight.'⁵² The article was brief and isolated from the wider trends and discussions in the *Broad Arrow* in that issue. However, the question of motivation, be it money or adventure, glory or combat, raised some fundamental issues about the character and the shared identity of the soldier.

The soldier's background was further examined in May 1881 when the latest census records highlighted the growing pressures on rural recruitment. Although the migration of the general populace from rural to urban dwellings had been recognised for some

⁵¹ The *Broad Arrow* (March 1895), p.370.

⁵² The *Broad Arrow* (March 1881), p.676.

time, and the army's preferred rural recruit was fast vanishing, the implications of such a transition on the army and the manner of man it could hope to receive did not trouble the *Broad Arrow*. As more recruits were sourced from the cities, their condition could be expected to increase in height and education but deteriorate in health and strength as well as moral fortitude it was argued. The newspaper expressed confidence but caution in its reading of the recruiting climate noting that whilst not a problem in 1881, there was the potential that it could become a future concern warranting further consultation.⁵³

Although on the whole positive in its presentation of the soldier, the *Broad Arrow* was not blind to his faults. The newspaper tended to be fairly detached however, offering the impression that while unsatisfactory soldiers were present in the army, they were not representative. Concern was expressed when suggestions of soldiers of a below-par standard came to light, and schemes or systems intended to discourage bad behaviour or undesirable characters received support. There did not appear to exist to any great sense of 'us and them' with regards to good, law-abiding soldiers and their less savoury comrades, nor were specific sections of the army targeted as particularly at fault, although the immaturity and unreliability of young soldiers were not infrequently referenced. The stance, as expressed in the *Broad Arrow* at least, was rather more subtle, acknowledging that good conduct was not universal and expressing hope that the culprits could be dealt with without implicating the army as a whole, in the eyes of the public especially.

⁵³ The *Broad Arrow* (May 1881), p.635.

An article appearing in the *Broad Arrow* reproduced from *The Times* in January 1882, for example, discussed the perceived decline in discipline following the 1867 abolition of flogging and the condition of military prisons. Short-service men were directly identified as major culprits as the article suggested that more crimes were committed by young soldiers as they were more prone to dishonesty. Furthermore, the article discussed the presence of unsuitable men in the army, with two-thousand offenders annually discharged for poor conduct. The newspaper questioned the quality of the recruiting system in allowing such men to enlist but also queried whether they would be of greater value and more effective in wartime than their quieter and more disciplined men – a fear shared by the War Office.⁵⁴ Although not the words of the military but rather *The Times*, the presence of article in the *Broad Arrow* demonstrates the willingness of soldiers to engage with the question of discipline and improvement in the military and to perceive the issue as not applicable to all soldiers but still a genuine issue requiring rectification.

The presence of short-service soldiers and their inherent youth was not an uncommon topic of complaint for the *Broad Arrow*. As *The Times* had suggested, the immaturity of young soldiers brought with it further failings, moral and physical which were not representative of soldiers at large. In discussing progress in the army in 1890, one article bemoaned both the quality of such soldiers but also the impression they gave to the public with regards to the army's quality more generally. The army at home is immature, the article admitted, and unfortunately this is the army the public sees. But, it

⁵⁴ The *Broad Arrow* (January 1882), pp.111-112, from 'Military Prisons' in *The Times* (27 January 1882), p.3.

claimed, the soldier of five or six years serving abroad is strong, reliable and well educated it.⁵⁵

Short-service soldiers gave cause for some consternation but were not, in general, singled out as the main culprits in relation to crime and bad conduct in the army. The short-service soldier appears to have represented a longer-term anxiety over the future of the army and its continued efficiency and that of the soldier but the character was not so regularly questioned. What is perhaps more significant is the willingness of the *Broad Arrow* to enter into the question of the calibre and status of the soldier. The newspaper was frequently open to discussions over the quality of soldiers and did not appear to conceal suggestions that standards were not universally high. There were instances in which the military seemed to defend itself however. Youth and inexperience did play a key role in offering some distinction between seasoned men and undesirable ones and when criticism of the military man's conduct did arise, it usually led to questions over whether more could be done to tighten recruiting standards suggesting that the problem was imported from the outside.

In some cases, the *Broad Arrow* did object to suggestions that recruiting and young soldiers were to blame for low standards in the army. When Assistant Adjutant-General of Recruiting Colonel Brind suggested that the clergy should offer character references for local recruits he met with particular opposition. The army could make good soldiers and good men of wild individuals it was argued in the *Broad Arrow*; no man should not

⁵⁵ The *Broad Arrow* (March 1890), pp.353-354.

be barred because they lacked religious discipline.⁵⁶ There appeared to be, within limits, a sense of camaraderie and belief that every man could make a good soldier.

CONCLUSION

The *Broad Arrow* presents a valuable insight into the perspective of the soldier from the semi-public medium of the service newspaper. It reflects to a great extent the trends and concerns which were identified in civilian circles in Section II. For the most part, there is an identifiable consensus in the articles, editorials and letters over issues of army reform, the development of the soldier and his social integration. Collectively, there is a pragmatic and, at times, contradictory stance in relation to the War Office and public desire for military reform. The necessity of improvement is not contested. Nor is the suggestion that the army contained both desirable and undesirable characters in its ranks. The overwhelming impression is one of a majority of respectable and capable servicemen keen to see the service as a whole brought in line.

There is a willingness to challenge and criticise the government and civilian attitudes to the soldier however, a growth which reflects the trend in public and military authorities lessening tolerance of prejudice and discrimination against the soldier as the nineteenth century drew to a close. However, the tone of the *Broad Arrow* is not of militancy or division but broadly of engagement and legitimacy. The *Broad Arrow* demonstrates a willingness and readiness on the part of the soldier to engage with the public and political debate concerning himself and his comrades and to develop an independent but largely sympathetic perspective.

⁵⁶ The *Broad Arrow* (March 1895), p.299.

This readiness to enter into the public discussion of the rank-and-file and contribute to a civilian awakening to the soldier appeared in various forms, from letters to local newspapers to engaging with the public on the streets and in the pubs. The arguments presented in the *Broad Arrow* were delivered to the fullest however, in the military memoir. The remainder of Section III will explore the soldiers' perspective through the literature produced by veterans recounting their service in the ranks for the benefit of the British public. As with the *Broad Arrow*, the soldiers' memoirs will demonstrate a considerable level of engagement amongst the rank-and-file with the reform debate and, moreover, a desire to offer their voices of experience to the discussion.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PUBLISHED THOUGHTS I:

THE MILITARY MEMOIR AND DIARY, REFORMS AND BARRACK-MATES

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 6 highlighted the soldier's absence from Victorian literature, with only a handful of authors, novelists and poets choosing to engage to any meaningful extent with the military man when not in the realms of imperial adventure literature. The soldier enjoyed a social and cultural presence in other forms however. Further to the appetite newspaper readers demonstrated for serialised accounts of army life, a sizeable volume of military memoirs was published during the final decades of the nineteenth century. Their existence highlights a growing civilian interest in the military way of life. This enthusiasm was shared by many serving and retired soldiers, several of whom were pleased to put their memories to print. The military memoirs, when examined alongside some of the more private diaries which survive, present a valuable insight into the opinions of the soldiers themselves.

The military memoir of the late-nineteenth century is a hitherto unexplored quantity of material which pertains to the rank-and-file soldiers and their position in British society. The practice of war veterans recording their experiences for public and personal benefit had acquired widespread popularity following the Napoleonic Wars. The 1820s and 1830s saw the publication of hundreds of memoirs, many of which were influenced by the Romantic literary genres of the early nineteenth century.¹ The memoirs gained increasing popularity as instructive and entertaining literature which was perceived as

¹ N. Ramsay, *Military Memoir and Romantic Literary Culture 1780 – 1835* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2011), p.193.

‘peculiarly British in character and which could successfully commemorate the nation’s wars for a middle-class audience’.² By the mid-1830s however, the military memoir was losing its prominence, inspiring instead a new style of military history with personal narratives woven in.³

The re-emergence of the military memoir from the 1870s onwards constitutes a re-appropriation rather than a direct continuation of those earlier examples. The late Victorian memoirs did not demonstrate the same sense of romanticism, although recollections of the wars with France did retain and even build on the romance of war.⁴ Instead, the memoirs examined in this thesis were written not to convey the sensation or horror of war but to extend to a susceptible public an invitation to break down continuing the barriers between the civilian and military worlds.

Whereas the early nineteenth century memoirs have received considerable interest in recent years from scholars, the wave of publications to emerge in the latter quarter of the century have not.⁵ This is partly because they are far fewer in number and also because the Napoleonic memoirs describe the experiences of mass mobilisation and brutal European conflict which define their period. However, the late Victorian memoir provides a vital window on the lives and experiences of the British soldier during a period which saw a seismic transition in the social and cultural position of the army in Britain.

² Ramsay, *The Military Memoir and Romantic Literary Culture*, p.193.

³ Ramsay, *The Military Memoir and Romantic Literary Culture*, p.194.

⁴ A. D. Harvey, *A Muse of Fire: Literature, Art and War* (London and Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 1998), p. 63.

⁵ M. McCormack and K. Lynch (eds.), *Britain’s Soldiers: Rethinking War and Society 1715-1815* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014).

The final two chapters of this thesis will bring together for the first time this small yet closely related body of literature which, by the authors' own admission, was intended to inform its readership on the realities of life in the military. Individual examples have been referenced in past studies into the Victorian army providing anecdotal evidence, but the collection has not been examined as a body of literature. The late Victorian memoirs sought to challenge the perception that the army was an extraordinary calling and to illustrate that, when the extreme circumstances of war were removed, the soldier was a man of equal respectability and humanity as his civilian peers. Though few in number - nineteen examples are examined in this thesis - the late Victorian memoirs all sought to portray the army in broadly the same light.

The memoirs were published on an individual basis, primarily by London based publishers, but also in Birmingham, Aldershot and Edinburgh. Some were published originally in local newspapers, such as the *Fife News*.⁶ The readership at which the memoirs were aimed is not immediately apparent. The reasons offered by several of the authors for publishing their memoirs suggests, however, that they were aimed at the public in general and specifically at individuals entertaining a 'feeling of interest...in the defenders of their country'.⁷ As Chapter 5's examination of the presence of the soldier in the press demonstrated, there developed over the final quarter of the 1800s a growing public fascination with the soldier. These memoirs were published in response to that interest. As Horace Wyndham, a veteran from an undisclosed regiment writing in 1899 states, his aim was to give, 'the general public – whose interest in everything

⁶ J. Pindar, *Autobiography of a Private Soldier* (Fife: Cuper-Fife, 1877).

⁷ W. W. Davies, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad: a Glimpse at his Private Life* (Vere St.: Star Publishing Works, 1893), p.1.

appertaining to the army is wide and sincere – some authentic information regarding the life and conditions of service of non-commissioned officers and private soldiers’.⁸

Chapter 8 will explore the nature of the rank-and-file as it was presented by men who had served within it. In contrast to the impersonal and generalised perspectives obtainable through the civilian or military press examined above, the military memoir and diary was an individual account written to enlighten those outside of the military community of its realities. The individual focus of this material highlights with greater clarity the feeling for and against reform and civilian interference generally. It provides context to the debate over the quality of the men entering the ranks, outlining the nature of the men with whom the memoirists served and the impact they had on life in the army. This chapter will highlight how the shared identity of the soldier enabled cohesion despite the array of characters in the barrack room and the social change imposed upon the soldiers from above. As the *Broad Arrow* also indicates, the Cardwell-Childers reforms were accepted as necessary, though some of their impact was resented.

THE SOLDIERS’ RESPONSE TO THE WAR OFFICE REFORMS

In attempting to acquaint the civilian with the military world, the memoirs often presented a candid assessment of the soldier’s experiences in the army. Naturally, the Cardwell-Childers Reforms feature prominently because of the influence they were intended to have over the enlistment, everyday life and future of the rank-and-file. As the first section of this thesis demonstrated, the intention was to transform the British

⁸ H. Wyndham, *The Queen’s Service: Being the Experiences of a Private Soldier in the British Infantry at Home and Abroad* (London: William Heineman, 1899), p.vii.

army into a career appealing to respectable working-class men. The movement to reform was not clandestine and occupied a tangible public presence which was followed and scrutinised, as Chapter 4 has highlighted, in the case of the British press. The memoirs reveal both support and opposition on the part of the soldiers to the initiatives and schemes which were introduced.

Central to the War Office reforms was the modernisation of the recruiting service of which *The Advantages of the Army* recruiting pamphlet was a key component. It features prominently in several of the veterans' recollections of enlistment and incited varying levels of praise and, more often, criticism from those who were influenced by it. Primarily, the over-optimistic spin imbued in the summaries of what a soldier receives came under the greatest attack. Wyndham includes a lengthy quotation from an 1890 edition of the pamphlet in his introduction, entitled 'The General Advantages of the Army', which outlines the kit and provisions the young man could expect to be given upon becoming a soldier.⁹ He criticises the grocery stoppages and later highlights that items one would assume were 'essential' were in fact listed by the army as 'groceries' and not provided. He claims that he doubts one in one hundred men would be aware of the distinction when enlisting.¹⁰ The veteran, journalist and novelist Robert Blatchford further attacks the War Office's neglect to outline the less glamorous and unappealing tasks soldiering entailed, such as carrying coal.¹¹

John Pindar, a Scottish veteran enlisted during the Crimean War, is particularly outspoken in his condemnation of *The Advantages of the Army*. Responding to criticism

⁹ Wyndham, *The Queen's Service*, p.xi.

¹⁰ Wyndham, *The Queen's Service*, pp.31-32.

¹¹ Blatchford, *My Life in the Army*, p.27.

from the public and the government over the high rates of desertion, Pindar suggests a major factor was the disillusion many young soldiers felt when they enlisted and discovered what they received in reality in comparison to the promises in the pamphlet:

I can assure you it is not seldom I have heard an intelligent recruit, who showed every appearance of making a good soldier, say that he had been enlisted under an entire misunderstanding and that he was justified in releasing himself as soon, in any manner, as he could find opportunity.¹²

Such criticism of the War Office pamphlet might be relatively superficial. The information was not technically wrong, it was weighted; a practice which is arguably common in advertising. The effect this had however, as outlined by Pindar, was a considerable downside for the reform movement. In particular it encouraged desertion which, reported as a crime, did little to improve public perceptions or to bolster the soldier's sense of self-worth.

Moreover, to mislead the recruit was the precise antithesis of what *The Advantages of the Army* was designed to achieve. By presenting the terms and conditions in a basic and unadulterated fashion, offering a clear definition as to what a young man could hope to gain by choosing the army as his career, the intention was to convince respectable working-class people that soldiers were professional, select men, who had not duped into enlisting but who had made a rational choice. For the recruits to be misled by the War Office instead of the recruiter rather defeated the object.

The campaign from the War Office to raise awareness of the opportunities the British Army offered did not go unheeded and did entice men to enlist. Wyndham recalls his enlistment and cites the influence of both *The Advantages of the Army* and the

¹² J. Pindar, *Autobiography of a Private Soldier*, p.164.

corresponding posters which were promoted as part of the same initiative as key to his decision: ‘Those who, like myself, have paused to examine these posters cannot fail to have been impressed with the munificence of the offer therein contained’.¹³ By that token, and judging by the presence the recruiting system occupies in the memories, the advertising element of the reforms could be afforded an estimation of success.

That said, it could be deduced from Wyndham’s account that the strictly scrupulous methods which formed the foundation of the new recruiting system fell some way short. The author offers a detailed account of his enlistment and notes the questionable activities of the recruiting sergeants. He describes a recruiter whom, like the old stereotypes of ‘Sergeant Kite’, conducted his business in a tavern nearby the St George’s Barracks in London and encouraged young men to enlist through empty promises and assurances. He supposedly convinced Wyndham that a ‘lad of his education’ would make full sergeant in a couple of years. In reality he made lance-sergeant in three.¹⁴ Furthermore, Wyndham comments on his wonderment at many of the other men being enlisted, noting their youth and stature. Later he came to understand how, out of an ‘anxiety to earn their fee’, recruiting sergeants were, ‘wont to regard as fish practically all who come to their nets and eagerly jump at almost anyone who likes to present himself’.¹⁵

Enlistment is one of the most common topics to arise in almost all the memoirs and diaries, with entire chapters dedicated to detailed accounts of those initial hours, days and weeks of service. The experience was evidently profound and many authors claim to

¹³ Wyndham, *The Queen’s Service*, p.2.

¹⁴ Wyndham, *The Queen’s Service*, p.201.

¹⁵ Wyndham, *The Queen’s Service*, pp.3-5.

hold clear recollections, sometimes decades later. Considering the emphasis on the recruitment in the War Office reforms accounts of enlistment provide an interesting insight into their implications, especially regarding the recruiting service and the formative stages of the soldier's development. The proportion of authors enlisted during or after the reforms is roughly equal to those enlisted prior to them and witnessed their implementation. Because so many memoirs summarise those formative days, a comparison is possible between pre and post-reform enlistment.

In general, the accounts vary little, suggesting that the reforms did not succeed in fundamentally changing the recruiting process. The motivations for enlistment offered by the various accounts are remarkably consistent with each other. A commonly cited route stems from childhood fascination, developed through the playing of war games or the admiring soldiers in uniform. William Martin for instance, who joined prior to the Crimean War, cites these as his motivations for enlisting, although he admits others had less choice in the matter. For Martin, the army offered an exciting future; 'At the age of sixteen and a half, disgusted with my surroundings and prospects, I enlisted...in a crack Highland regiment'.¹⁶ For Gowing, another veteran of the Crimea and Mole, a Troop Sergeant-Major in the Kings Hussars until the 1890s, their fascination with the army and with soldiers also began at school. Mole harboured a long-held desire to enlist, whilst Gowing was spurred on by his studies of Nelson and Wellington to volunteer just before the Crimean War.¹⁷ Post-reform soldiers express very similar motivations for their enlistment citing the appearance of soldiers in uniform and a deep seated fascination with military life.

¹⁶ W. Martin, *At the Front: Being a Realistic Record of a Soldier's Experience in the Crimean War* (Paisley, London: Alexander Gardner, 1893), p.11.

¹⁷ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, p.3; T. Gowing, *A Soldier's Experience or a Voice from the Ranks: Showing the Cost of War in Blood and Treasure* (Nottingham: T. Foreman and Sons, 1886), p.9.

Very few memoirs cite pressure from the recruiting sergeant or encouragement from the War Office as their major motivation. It is possible that some authors sought to conceal the fact that their soldiering career began through coercion, the shallow appeal of a wage or even trickery in favour of a romanticised ideal like a childhood ambition. However, it is significant to note that the army reforms do not play a central role in the veterans' accounts of enlistment, nor in the published memoirs or diaries in general. They appear more as references and generally arise in relation to other matters being recalled or discussed.

The impact of the reforms is alluded to in the memoirs. Localisation and territorialisation received particular attention and would appear to have achieved their objective in instilling a local family ethos into the regiment. Wallace Davies, formerly a sergeant in the 24th South Wales Borderers, cites the introduction of 'Townies', men hailing from the same town among whom a kind of free masonry existed, as a product of territorialisation. This, Davies explains, encouraged the men to behave more 'leniently in their dealings with one another' and created a bond which remained with them throughout their years of service, one of 'the advantages of the territorial system of recruiting'.¹⁸

Davies also cites disadvantages to the territorial system. A common complaint from the home battalions and the regimental depots was that those establishments had become ineffectual skeleton garrisons of very young and very old soldiers. Mole raises this issue in the final chapter of his memoir as he recalls the final years of his service during which

¹⁸ Davies, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad*, p.19.

he was Troop-Sergeant-Major for his regiment at home. He and his adjutant suffered great dips in their morale as they worked hard to build a smart and efficient unit of men only to have half drafted away before they could complete the task.¹⁹ In terms of operational efficiency, the issue may not have had too great an effect. But for the British army at home, it is argued that standards greatly suffered, as did morale among established soldiers.

The reform which most fundamentally changed the nature of the soldier was short service. Whilst there had always been a natural distinction between the old hands and the younger soldiers and recruits, the two experienced an even greater divergence following short service, further accentuated by the territorial system and the development of 'townies'. The presence of the short-service soldier in the British Army from the mid-1870s onwards was not debated as frequently among the diarists and memoirists as it was in the civilian and military press, however, some comments and estimations are offered as to the calibre of the men and the system. It was a mixed reception.

It should be noted that the majority of the commentary on short-service men comes from the long-service men who predated the scheme. Their perspective is reflective and that of an observer with an inherent tendency to compare the short-service soldier against the army as it once was. Furthermore, their age and experience and the weight of their responsibility over the youngsters demonstrably coloured their judgement. Whilst none of the memoirs dismiss short-service soldiers, the problems with discipline and efficiency which naturally accompanied the perpetually young short-service man,

¹⁹ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, p.351.

became a problem acutely identified by the older soldier, especially the NCO. As Mole states, ‘Soldiering was very different to what it had been in the regiment. The regiment was filled with boys...smooth faced, thoughtless lads, who wanted a school master rather than a sergeant-instructor’.²⁰

Mole describes the tensions caused by the contrast between the young and veteran soldiers. Statistically, crime and ill-discipline actually increased as a result of the lowering average age of the recruits, not because the new soldiers were naturally worse than their predecessors and older comrades, but because they required rather more careful handling. The older soldiers were afforded a level of respect, trust and leniency by their officers on account of their service and experience. The younger men, Mole suggests, were likely to take advantage of such leniency if it were extended to them. Therefore, the constraints of discipline were stricter when applied to the younger soldiers, which in reality translated to a statistical increase in ‘crime’.²¹ Further to this, however, Mole accuses the young recruits of lacking respect for the military penal system, encouraged by the transient nature of short-service and loss of sensible influences: ‘The newcomers...were a difficult lot to deal with; they didn’t care whether they went to the guard-room or not; and it was a common thing to hear a prisoner say... “What odds? It will be a rest. A clink ain’t a grave”’.²²

Mole is outspoken when regarding the short-service soldier. His experience of the scheme came in the latter years of his service when he was a senior NCO and the change in attitudes is reflected strongly in his recollections. As well as the discipline Mole

²⁰ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King’s Hussar*, p.333.

²¹ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King’s Hussar*, pp.58-59.

²² Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King’s Hussar*, p.60.

argues short service also damaged the soldiers' camaraderie. The long-term friendships and corresponding fellowship and goodwill was lessened by the greatly reduced period the men spent in the service:

There was the same amount of rough horseplay in the barracks but not the same good temper in the language used or in the practical jokes played. Selfishness began to creep in and take the place of the good fellowship that had existed between men who had passed the best part of their lives together and often fought side by side on the field of battle.²³

Despite this indictment, Mole was not an opponent of the short-service soldier; his criticism was born out of frustration from the responsibility he felt as an NCO. To their credit, Mole claims that the young soldiers demonstrated fewer of the grave vices of their predecessors, especially drink:

As a fact, the crime of a drunk was a rare one, instead of looking in the canteen for a "schemer" I would seek for him in the library, where he was generally to be found assuaging his thirst for knowledge and liquor with magazines and coffee.²⁴

This new breed of soldier, according to the veterans, was immature and lacked prudence. However, he was also burdened with fewer of the vices of the Tommy Atkins of old. They were not rejected by the old guard who felt they were, 'in short...sober, eager, willing, and take them for all in all, good stuff for soldiers'.²⁵

There is some evidence of bitterness however, and offence was taken at the open desire to improve the class of the recruit. Pindar, the most vitriolic author in this instance, denounces short service claiming, 'I can safely affirm that the recruits joining with me in 1858 were equal, if not superior in physique and education, to the recruits of 1876-77'.²⁶

²³ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, pp.58-59.

²⁴ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, pp.333-334.

²⁵ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, p.334.

²⁶ Pindar, *Autobiography of a Private Soldier*, p.165.

He accuses his young comrades of swapping the real work of soldiering for the classroom, and of lacking the commitment of long-service men to their profession.²⁷ Pindar also remonstrates bitterly that the pay long-service soldiers received was poor in comparison to short-service men considering that a young man may pursue another career whereas an old soldier, broken by years of military service, could only hope to manage light work. For old soldiers such as Pindar, short service could be seen as a considerable insult.

The effect short service had on the NCO also attracted considerable criticism. The immaturity of short-service men generally, as Mole had described, increased the need for capable and experienced NCOs. Despite this, the memoirs highlight how soldiers were able to leave the army just as they were reaching their prime. As a result younger and younger men were being promoted prematurely to fill the space vacated by their predecessors. The young NCO had not had the experience to understand the temperament and disposition of the men under him, argues Pindar and the premature promotion could sour relations:

At present (1877) I can see a soldier of one year's service taking his place amongst the corporals; but what is the result unless he be one who has been better brought up and has learned how to command *himself*? This early promotion over his comrades is apt to make him proud and haughty, and very often this brings his inferiors into crime in the shape of an unguarded reply to some offensive or too haughty expression.²⁸

John Acland, a 'gentleman-ranker' who enlisted as a means of gaining a commission since, at the age of twenty-five, he was too old to enter the officer corps directly, is one of the few short-service soldiers to pass comment on the system from within. He also

²⁷ Pindar, *Autobiography of a Private Soldier*, p.165.

²⁸ Pindar, *Autobiography of a Private Soldier*, p.168.

advocates a change in the system of NCO recruitment in order to address the imbalance. He suggests that capable men should have been recruited to become NCOs as soon as possible, with the objective of completing a long-service engagement and developing command experience from the beginning. Better pay and provisions should have been offered as an incentive, he adds.²⁹ Despite being a gentleman ranker who served as an ordinary rank for only a short spell, Acland was arguably well placed to make such a suggestion having risen from Private to Sergeant in a matter of months, and with his education and reputation as a 'gentleman', Pindar may have approved. It was not the class of man which concerned him however, but the maturity and experience he possessed.

For the most part, the memoirs present a respectful and positive attitude to the Cardwell-Childers Reforms. The schemes certainly received some criticism, however, in terms of the broader philosophy of the reforms, there was a sense of approval. The improvements to the soldiers' conditions were welcomed. Their impact on the nature of the soldier, as it was perceived by the soldiers themselves, seems to be particularly complex. Despite frustrations over the youth and immaturity of new recruits and the inexperience of the NCOs, there was an over acceptance of the soldier in all his forms as the nineteenth century drew to a close and the benefits were acknowledged. As Major-General Lee, in his preface to Davies's *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad* states, 'why more of our young men do not embrace this life – made easier now by short service and the greater attention paid to the soldier's mental as well as physical wellbeing – passes my comprehension'.³⁰

²⁹ J. E. Acland, *Through the Ranks to a Commission* (London: MacMillan, 1881), pp.305-306.

³⁰ Davies, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad*, p.i.

'THE SOLDIER' IDENTITY

As Davies termed it:

Tommy Atkins is a strange individual when looked upon in the abstract; a curious compound of both good and evil; but to his credit let it be said, the good predominates.³¹

To be a 'soldier' constituted more than simply belonging to a profession. It was an identity which positioned the individual in the collective and endowed each one with a shared personality, outlook and *raison d'être*. The nature of military life and the position of the regiment at the heart of each man's army experience were both engineered to remove the 'individual' and instil a sense of belonging and duty in the men living under their influence. It was essential not only for discipline but to enable a relatively harmonious state of cohabitation to exist amongst grown men compelled to work, eat, sleep and to some extent relax as a unit and as a family. Isolation from wider society further defined in the men a shared identity as soldiers, removed from civilian life and moulded carefully into a uniform and coordinated creature.

The identity of the soldier was perceived by the civilian world too, although a lack of initiation was prone to create a quite different impression of the character of 'Tommy Atkins'. The memoirs and diaries attest strongly to the fact that the men were aware of the identity they assumed when they enlisted and in the majority, they took pride in it. Several make reference to the pride they felt when first they put on their uniform or finally completed recruit drill and became full dutymen. Mole describes receiving his kit in 1863, submitting his civilian clothes for storage, admiring himself as a 'soldier at

³¹ Davies, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad*, p.1.

last'.³² He expresses further pride in passing from recruit to dutyman, able to spend his afternoons on guard in full uniform with the older soldiers instead of on the parade ground.³³ Corbett recalls similar emotions from his enlistment into a Highland regiment in 1891, having coveted the life as a soldier or sailor since childhood. He notes how he felt 'very proud to think that I was doing something worthwhile'.³⁴ The negative perceptions of the soldier were therefore not universally subscribed to and, for certain individuals, an appeal inherent in soldiering led men to enlist for reasons of enthusiasm and pride which manifested into loyalty to one's regiment and comrades.

Of course this is not to suggest that all men who approached the army willingly would not regret their decision. The appeal of military life could soon vanish once the realities became apparent. John Moode, a Scottish soldier serving in the 1880s, began a fascination with the army when he first saw a Highland soldier in Edinburgh as a child. 'I looked at him entranced', he notes, 'for I had never seen a soldier before, and there and then the desire to be a soldier fixed itself in my mind and never left me until I joined the army. After that it left me very soon.'³⁵ Moode's first night in Edinburgh Castle brought home the realities of life in the army, especially the poor food and accommodation, leading the realisation that he was making a mistake. For Moode, this dawned too late. His account is one of the less positive and more unusual examples.

Feelings of pride as a soldier were not restricted to enthusiastic recruits. The identity of the soldier extended beyond the acquiring of a uniform. The soldiers' recollections

³² Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, pp.30-32.

³³ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, p.53.

³⁴ A. F. Corbett, 'Service through Six Reigns: 1891 – 1953', (1953) in T. H. McGuffie, (ed.) *Rank and File: the common soldier in peace and war 1642 – 1914* (London: 1964), pp.38-39.

³⁵ J. W. Moode, *A Soldier's Life and Experiences in the British Army* (Ardrossan: A. Guthrie, 1888), p 3.

describe a range of emotional experiences, especially when promoted or embarking for overseas duty. As Gowing explains, ‘It is not an easy thing to describe my feelings [upon being drafted]. I deemed myself, I must acknowledge, a proud man; and felt like the honour of our dear old isle hung upon my shoulders’.³⁶ Sergeant-Instructor Henry Williams also noted in his diary his determination to serve when he volunteered to be sent out to Egypt following the war of 1883:

The army medical officer who examined me as to my fitness for foreign-service asked me if I really knew what I was volunteering for. He said “it was a wretched and unhealthy climate and there I should be as it were cut off from all civilisation and have to live practically the life of a native”.³⁷

Several others, including Sergeant John Menzies, who in 1883 was late of the 45th or 1st Nottinghamshire Regiment, emphasise their yearning to fulfil their duties with their comrades, some claiming, for example, that they requested as recruits that they be placed on reserve lists to be drafted early.³⁸ The soldier’s sense of duty instilled a purpose and a pride which lay at the foundation of military life for many servicemen.

For the soldiers themselves, as well as the British public, Tommy Atkins was a character of distinct attributes to which each man subscribed to some degree. This characterisation ran deeper than a penchant for the uniform and a willingness to serve overseas. The identity of the soldier was considered to entail certain outlooks and mind-sets and it was even perceived to have physical as well as psychological manifestations. Davies subscribes to the notion that soldiers shared a ‘common and distinctive appearance’, especially in the eyes, caused by the strain of peering into the dark on

³⁶ Gowing, *A Soldier’s Experience or A Voice from the Ranks*, p.12.

³⁷ National Army Museum (Hereafter NAM): Manuscript Diary: H. Williams, Sergeant-Instructor, ‘Reminiscences of a Soldier’ (c.1883) No. 1992-08-372.

³⁸ J. Menzies, *Reminiscences of an Old Soldier with Poems* (Edinburgh: Crawford & M’Cabe, 1883), P.7.

sentry duty, from repeated drilling and the discipline associated with drill and military life in general.³⁹

Blatchford further emphasises the positive impact military training and regimental life had on the soldier: ‘a soldier is a more fully developed and a more completely organised man than the civilian. He has certain muscular and spiritual qualities developed which in the untrained man are dormant’.⁴⁰ The soldier could also claim considerable personal qualities such as fortitude and doggedness, facing immense physical tasks with ‘bulldog spirit’ and adopting a ‘cold’ attitude to death.⁴¹ Further challenging their low social status, Blatchford also claims the soldier was also a ‘stickler for fair play’, a tendency more closely associated with the middle-classes of late-nineteenth-century Britain.⁴² Such physical and mental strength was, according to Brunlees-Patterson’s account of service in India, enhanced by the educational advancement military service permitted, transforming illiterate men into educated soldiers proud of their own ‘betterment’.⁴³

Fundamental in many of the soldiers’ perceptions of their character was a keen sense of humour. Wallace claims, ‘Tommy Atkins is a jolly fellow to live with’ as soldiers would generally appear in the ‘best of spirits’ and are ‘adaptable’ to their surroundings. Such humour could take the form of nicknames, from surnames such as ‘Chalky’ (White) and ‘Spud’ (Murphy), to appearance, ‘Longfellow’ (a tall man), and personality or reputation, as in ‘Daddy’ for a well-liked Commanding Officer.⁴⁴ Practical jokes also formed a mainstay of the soldier’s comedy with several memoirs reciting with pleasure

³⁹ Davies, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad*, p.1.

⁴⁰ Blatchford, *My Life in the Army*, pp.58-59.

⁴¹ Davies, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad*, p.5.

⁴² Davies, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad*, p.29.

⁴³ J. Brunlees-Patterson (“Wanderer”), *Life in the Ranks of the British Army in India and on Board a Troopship* (London: John and Robert Maxwell, 1885), p.157.

⁴⁴ Davies, *Tommy Atkins Abroad*, p.4.

the elaborate wheezes the men performed upon each other. Such pranks included telling new recruits to bring their canteens (water bottles) to muster parade in order to receive mustard and mocking up court-martials to scare fellow rankers. The details of such pranks were often handed down or allowed for the subject to turn prankster and perform the joke on other soldiers.

The qualities of 'the soldier' according to the memoirs transcended the individual and even the wider improvements supposedly made over the 1870s and 1880s. Whilst educational opportunities provided yet further evidence that 'Tommy Atkins' was in fact superior to his civilian counterpart, the 'old soldiers' the likes of whom were still the mainstay of the British Army at the beginning of the 1870s were also credited by their younger comrades as possessing greater powers of leadership, stoicism and military proficiency. Pindar states, 'We hear much...of a better class of recruits for the army, and no doubt educational ability in a non-commissioned officer is all very well; but if he is deficient of a thorough knowledge of human nature and of how men who are under the restraints of martial law should be governed, he can never attain to real success'.⁴⁵ The positive attributes of the soldier appeared for the most part to apply to the men as a whole and whilst applying in varying degrees depending on the age or branch of the recruit, the qualities of Tommy Atkins were something the memoirs and diaries confirmed with few exceptions.

Equally, however, there was a clear awareness of the weaknesses and short-comings of the soldier and the public's accusation that Tommy Atkins was a man with major faults was not disputed. An issue of much concern for the public was morality. In the case of

⁴⁵ Pindar, *Autobiography of a Private Soldier*, p.43.

the Victorian soldier, the issue lay not with the martial nature of his employment but his observance of God and association with prostitution. In response to both charges the soldiers' memoirs were keen to present their case.

The soldier received regular religious education, however reluctantly. Sundays entailed compulsory church services and in some cases there was the opportunity for morning and (preferred) afternoon services. The soldiers did not generally relish the Sunday service, although Acland claims that the majority were respectful when in attendance and took part in the hymns.⁴⁶ The army catered for Church of England, Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic and Wesleyan Christians. The soldiers were, on the whole, respectful of one another's personal religious beliefs and could be comparatively private in their practices. 'Soldiers are wonderfully good in one respect, [in] that they never interfere with another on such points. A man might make as much religious show as he liked, and if he did not bother his comrades by it, they would not bother him.'⁴⁷

The extent to which religion impacted on the soldier's everyday life was less great. As one diarist noted in 1891, every man attended church once a week and additional lessons were given by preachers. Nevertheless many soldiers continued to live within what the *military* rules allowed them to do, and more besides.⁴⁸ The most notable moral transgression soldiers engaged in was the use of prostitution. Public perceptions of its prevalence derived particularly from the known strength of prostitution in garrison towns, which was taken as evidence of the soldier's sexual habits. In some memoirs, this is disputed. 'Welsh', an anonymous member of the rank-and-file, admits that the

⁴⁶ Acland, *Through the Ranks to a Commission* p.109.

⁴⁷ Acland, *Through the Ranks to a Commission*, p.68.

⁴⁸ Anon, 'A Kentish Soldier: Experiences of a Soldier' (1891), in R. Palmer (ed.), *The Rambling Soldier* (Harmondsworth: Kestrel Books, 1977), p.130.

garrison town might sustain prostitution, however, he disputes the accusation that the army was responsible for its development. Furthermore, he argues the majority of prostitutes in garrison towns derive from elsewhere disproving the claims that soldiers had corrupted local girls. Welsh redirects the blame onto civilian society which he identifies as being complicit, and makes reference to the social background of the girls themselves, claiming that a soldier would never insult any ‘proper’ girl.⁴⁹

An anonymous Kentish soldier’s diary entry was rather less defensive in his thoughts on the soldiers’ associations with prostitutes. Noting the perpetual presence of such women outside the Aldershot barracks, he comments:

I found that to be able to boast of a frequent connection with these poor women was considered to be a most manly thing by a great many of the men and in fact the conversation in my own barrack room at night would have astonished anyone chancing to hear it by its absolutely immoral nature.⁵⁰

The collective identity of Tommy Atkins was open to moral reproach. Prostitution and Godliness did not represent the be-all and end-all of the soldiers’ estimation of their character but there was a clear sense of anxiety over the presence of the former and the limits of the latter. In extreme cases, particularly religious individuals did struggle to satisfy their spiritual wellbeing with the soldiering life. Moode experienced the most acute crisis of faith as he struggled to remain in touch with Christianity, especially when in India and among the native religious elements. When back in England he became heavily involved in the Salvation Army to the extent that his regimental CO agreed to his discharge, describing him as a nuisance.⁵¹ For the most part however, the memoirs

⁴⁹ Welsh (Pseud.), *Recollections of an Old Soldier by one of the Rank and File* (Birmingham: C. Aston, 1886), pp.34-35.

⁵⁰ Anon, ‘A Kentish Soldier’, p.130.

⁵¹ Moode, *A Soldier’s Life and Experiences in the British Army*, p.7.

and diaries indicate contentment, rather than concern, with the moral standards by which the soldier lived.

Drink is overwhelmingly acknowledged as *the* vice of the soldier. Few authors shy away from acknowledging the frequent and detrimental effects of alcohol and even for those who did not drink, the topic was not an uncommon one in relation to the conduct and experiences others in the barrack room. There were teetotallers in the army, but not many. Some encouraged their fellow soldiers to abstain, although many managed to do so for only a short while.⁵² Some explanation has been offered as to how and why the soldier struggled so greatly with his drinking. Welsh suggests that whilst many soldiers undeniably drank to excess they did so, in part, to survive harsh living conditions. In many climates in the Empire, he argues, it is the only safe thing to drink. Brandy, for example, was taken when cholera was around. In particularly hot climates in peacetime, the men drank beer during the day and rum at night and for the most part, they remained healthy. The men under Lord Roberts, he further emphasises, were sustained by rum.⁵³

Other memoirs attempt to contextualise soldiers' drinking, describing a routine of frugal abstinence followed by periods of binge blow-outs.⁵⁴ Davies further suggests that when on posting in particular, boredom was the reason behind the men's drinking.⁵⁵ Menzies offers some confirmation as he identifies 'idleness [as] the bane of the soldier' which turned men to the accompanying 'temptations'.⁵⁶ Conversely, Acland also cites the regiment or company moving, even within Britain, as having an effect on the soldiers'

⁵² Acland, *Through the Ranks to a Commission*, p.70.

⁵³ Welsh (Pseud.), *Recollections of an Old Soldier by one of the Rank and File*, pp.56-62.

⁵⁴ Davies, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad*, p.3.

⁵⁵ Davies, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad*, p.13.

⁵⁶ Menzies, *Reminiscences of an Old Soldier with Poems*, p.3.

drinking habits. He suggests that the disruption to their daily routine, and the additional fatigues the marching orders usually entailed, unsettled the men. Drinking to excess was at its worst at such times even among men who were usually steady and well behaved, and despite the increased vigilance of their officers and NCOs.⁵⁷ Less sympathetically, Wyndham blames the regimental canteen where the men could obtain beer, sometimes in pints but often in half or full-gallon cans, which they consumed quickly and on relatively empty stomachs.⁵⁸ The causes were clearly numerous, and although the most potent motivation for drink seems unclear, its prominence and ill-effects are universally identified and decried.

Besides its physical and socially negative effects, the memoirs highlight a further impact drink had on the character of Tommy Atkins. Alcohol was consumed even within the tightest military regime and therefore any soldier, even those with otherwise good conduct, risked punishment. As Wyndham points out, in *army* terms, anyone who is not sober is drunk.⁵⁹ This did not necessarily mean that punishment was guaranteed to anyone who partook in a glass of beer; as Acland indicates, those men who became rowdy after drinking were likely to be reprimanded and those who could better hold their drink (often the older soldiers) would generally be permitted to retire to bed quietly without interference from their NCOs.⁶⁰ For the younger soldiers however, misconduct whilst under the influence of alcohol was frequently punished, even if the reprimand was delayed as Woolard, a diarist in the Devonshire regiment, attests:

We got rather too much beer and got pushing up against people in the street and the military police told us to go to barracks. We went in, there was four of us two of them was put into the guard room and me and another one was told to go to our room. Of course I thought I was let off

⁵⁷ Acland, *Through the Ranks to a Commission*, pp.150-151.

⁵⁸ Wyndham, *The Queen's Service*, p.99.

⁵⁹ Wyndham, *The Queen's Service*, p.99.

⁶⁰ Acland, *Through the Ranks to a Commission*, p.62.

but I was not. The next morning we fell in... and I was called out in front of the captain and I got three days defaulters.⁶¹

Davies further confirms the link between alcohol and the defaulter's sheet, suggesting that as many as eight in ten crimes committed in the army had drink as the root cause. To illustrate this point, he recalls a New Year's Eve in which so many men got drunk they pledged *en masse* to abstain. As a result the guardroom remained empty for the next fourteen days and not a single offence occurred among the eight hundred men in the barracks. This good behaviour, the likes of which he stresses he had never seen before, continued for four months until the old habits returned.⁶²

For the NCOs required to deal with drunk men when on guard duty the anti-social effects were acutely felt. Payday was dreaded. Acland recalls such events when he was in charge of the guard as a young lance-sergeant. As early as six o' clock in the afternoon men and boys returned to the barracks drunk and by tattoo roll-call at ten o' clock twenty men were reported absent. Before long the cells of the guard-room contained some fifteen prisoners who rapidly became rowdy and violent. Acland was forced to open the windows and remove their boots in an attempt to cool them off and eventually to decant them to separate cells. He notes, however, that, 'A night like that certainly shows soldiers in the worst possible light; and happily, it is not a frequent occurrence'.⁶³

More than the personal injury sustained by being charged with drunkenness however, the campaign of certain soldiers to acquire alcohol by whatever means was liable to

⁶¹ NAM: MS Diary: Pte. Woolard, 'Journal', (c.1891-93), No. 1990-07-134.

⁶² Davies, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad*, p.3.

⁶³ Acland, *Through the Ranks to a Commission*, pp.155-157.

create the most prominent wedge between comrades. Young and naïve soldiers in particular would often be taken advantage of. Davies describes such a cycle as a young soldier is flattered into generosity until he has spent his savings on drink for the older men. ‘This would last perhaps a week until eventually the soldier wakes up ill, penniless and friendless. He will denounce drink and his comrades until he is won round again.’⁶⁴ It is often emphasised by the soldiers how such men were few and far between. Their presence however, which it was suggested was in every company in every regiment, was keenly felt. It was perhaps one of the few instances in which the soldier may well have agreed with the unfavourable estimations the civilian public drew with regards to the soldier.

The memoirs and diaries which survive illustrate the importance of the shared culture and identity which came to define the majority of men who served in the ranks. This identity was not at odds with the popular civilian impression of the soldier. The memoirists were ready to acknowledge the vices they or their comrades had, and to accept them. In general, the tensions which arose as a result were not greater than the cohesion which bound them. To be a soldier required different attributes from those found in other professions and walks of life outside the army; the experiences, the regiment and the uniform of an individual were what mattered.

FELLOW SOLDIERS

The impact soldiers had on one another on a personal level presents another dimension to the insight the military memoirs and diaries offer into the identity of the soldier. Further to the collective perception of ‘Tommy Atkins’ as an abstract identity, they

⁶⁴ Davies, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad*, p.2.

described in detail are the personal characteristics of the men they physically encountered: fellow recruits, members of their barrack room and their NCOs and officers. An examination of this personal perspective offers a more personal impression of the men as they actually were, removed from the shared and occasionally idealised self-image of the soldier.

The memoirs demonstrate a clear willingness to discuss both the positive and the negative individuals encountered in the army; often they offer an unwritten disclaimer implied by a distinction between the characteristics and outlook of the men they describe and those of the authors themselves. This disclaimer amounts to the intimation that a man was always capable of selecting his associates and that any unsavoury characters he encountered did not reflect on him personally.

Often the most vivid and unpleasant descriptions of fellow soldiers derived from accounts of enlistment during which time everyone applying was housed together in receiving rooms awaiting the attestation procedure. The men, unrefined in any way by training, uniform or discipline caused some considerable alarm to several of the memoir authors. Blatchford recalled his recruiting sergeant's assurances that his comrades would be 'superior young gentlemen'. 'Superior gentlemen they might have been', he admits, but, 'cheerful gentlemen they did not seem; clean gentlemen they were not'.⁶⁵ Besides their shabby appearances, Blatchford also notes the demeanour and manners of his new comrades who were, 'chatting and larking and using language which made me feel physically sick'.⁶⁶ Blatchford's ungenerous description is echoed by several others. In

⁶⁵ Blatchford, *My Life in the Army*, pp.5-6.

⁶⁶ Blatchford, *My Life in the Army*, p.8.

describing his enlistment, Wyndham recalls the twenty-five or thirty men he had observed in the receiving room as being:

An assemblage of all sorts and conditions... a social kaleidoscope ... From the smart dapper city clerk down on his luck...to the gentleman's son enlisting with vague ideas of performing feats of valour at the cannon's mouth at the earliest possible date (with the prompt recognition of the same in the shape of a commission) to the evil-looking loafer, hailing from the purlieu of Whitechapel and the ruddy-faced chawbacon, fresh from the plough-tail and reeking of...manure.⁶⁷

Wyndham's experience was more complex than Blatchford's as the men he encountered were more varied and 'each class was represented'.

Descriptions of the unfiltered grouping of every recruit together in the receiving room regardless of class, background or manner, presents an exceptionally valuable insight into the nature of the men who were enlisting throughout Victoria's reign and the effect military training and discipline had in transforming a social amalgam into a unified group. The memoirs do not write-off all recruits from the outset and as Mole points out, 'the great bulk...were steady, well conducted lads who needed leading, not driving, to make them good soldiers'.⁶⁸ The attitude towards fellow recruits was nonetheless less favourable than to fellow soldiers.

The memoirs also provide some level of analysis with regards to the manner of man who enlisted and his motivations. On reflection, Mole divides the recruits he encountered during his military career, especially those enlisted under short service, into three classes. The first enlisted purely for the love of soldiering. These, he claims, made the best soldiers. The second were driven to enlist by necessity. They were usually older,

⁶⁷ Wyndham, *The Queen's Service*, p.6.

⁶⁸ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, p.337.

had a greater tendency to be dissatisfied and begrudging towards the army. They could be proven to make good soldiers through. The third class Mole identities were the fraudulent enlisters who sought simply to acquire and sell the kit before deserting.⁶⁹

Menzies identifies further characteristics from the background of the recruit, drawing a distinction, much as the War Office was wont to do, between rural and urban recruits. He notes that urban men took with greater readiness to military life and felt most quickly at home with barrack room living whilst country recruits felt the change more acutely. With regards to their personal attributes however, Menzies states that, 'The country lad is generally the most humble, obedient and easily governed soldier; but the city-born recruit is, as a rule, the smartest, tidiest and most easily trained'.⁷⁰ The memoirs in particular demonstrate a pronounced awareness of the social theories underpinning the 'recruit' characterisation, as illustrated by Menzies and Mole, and of the process which refined the men into the soldiers they recognised. The collective identity of the soldier, as considered above, was not conferred as an automatic status and each man's individuality was very apparent in those initial hours, days and weeks of service defined by anything from mannerism, use of language or clothing.

If fellow recruits had a significant impact on the new soldier, then equally as potent was the presence of the established soldier. The influence of 'old soldiers' becomes markedly reduced as the effects of short service take hold. The memoirs recollecting experiences of enlisting in the late 1850s and 1860s and subsequent service as NCOs during the 1870s and 1880s identify more readily with old soldiers. This is partly accountable to the informal practice prior to short service by which older men were

⁶⁹ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, p.335.

⁷⁰ Menzies, *Reminiscences of an Old Soldier*, p.7.

assigned youngsters to mentor through their early days in barracks. This was possible, as Mole explains, because the ratio of old to young soldiers was much greater.⁷¹ Martin, whose memoirs relate to one of the earliest periods of those examined, recalls how his fellow barrack-mates taught him the basic skills he would need such as to fold and polish his kit and perpetuated an easy camaraderie within their quarters:

The men of the regiment were a jolly, light-hearted set of fellows, very agreeable and merry comrades...as they had no occasion to trouble themselves about food and clothing, there was an absence of selfishness amongst them, and as no one knew each other thoroughly there was no room for pretence.⁷²

Indeed, Martin is particularly positive in his recollections. The influence of the collective soldier identity is particularly strong. Not all experiences were as positive however. The journal of Private Woolard reveals a tenser and less comfortable introduction to his barrack room in which several of the other inhabitants preyed on the young recruit and sought only to relieve him of his newly issued kit. Woolard recounts his experiences as he first set foot in his barrack room:

Sooner than I got inside then I was greeted with 'what yer chum, where do you come from?' Well, I told them and I had a little chat. They said is your kit alright? I said I was just going to have a look. Well, they all gathered round picking up one thing then another and I was keeping a bright eye on them. They was telling me what I ought to have. Well, I knowed [sic] just as much as they did. One wanted a sub of soap another a sub of blacking but it did not come off. Just like that they was all recruits and I knew that if I let them take a lift out of me they would soon make my kit fly. They could soon see I knew what was what.⁷³

Woolard's description is perhaps the reaction civilians might have more readily expected to encounter in the barrack room, if the stereotype of the criminal-cum-soldier

⁷¹ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, p.27.

⁷² Martin, *At the Front*, p.12.

⁷³ NAM: MS Diary: Woolard, 'Journal'.

was to be believed. Woolard's experiences, which took place in early 1891, in fact post-date those of Martin who had enlisted several decades earlier, raising some doubt over the supposed advances in the calibre of the men.

The majority of memoirs recounting the experiences of entering barracks for the first time do not feature such abuse. For Robertson, the Field-Marshal who rose from the ranks, the event was less than savoury but not so dreadful that he did not come to empathise with his comrades. The old soldiers exacted 'due deference' from their new barrack-mates. 'Although very admirable comrades in some respects', comments Robertson, 'and with a commendable code of honour of their own [they] were in many cases – not in all – addicted to rough behaviour, heavy drinking and hard swearing'.⁷⁴

Despite the presence of such low behaviour, Robertson does not express any ill will. Instead he describes them as a product of their environment in which they 'year in year out went through the same routine, treated like a machine of an inferior kind and having little prospect of finding employment on the expiration of their twenty-one year engagement, lived for only the present'.⁷⁵ The overwhelming impression is one of adaptation; the new men quickly learnt how to handle their older comrades and achieved relatively fluid integration as a result.

Other authors praise the old soldiers, especially when in retrospect they appreciated the sense of discipline they brought to the other men which in turn made life that much easier for the NCO. As Acland comments, 'When I joined in 1873, the regiment,

⁷⁴ W. Robertson, 'From Private to Field Marshall', in T. H. McGuffie (ed.), *Rank and file: the common soldier in peace and war* (London: Hutchinson, 1964), p.72.

⁷⁵ W. Robertson, 'A Soldier's Life' (c.1921), in R. Palmer (ed.), *The Rambling Soldier*, p.90.

although very weak in numbers, had plenty of good “old soldiers”; and these men were a great help in the maintaining of discipline. They knew what was expected of them in the barrack room and they did it’.⁷⁶ Indeed, in terms of discipline and assisting recruits settle into barrack life, the old soldiers appear to have had almost as great a hand as the NCOs. In a great many cases, the basic routines and expectations of the army were passed down to recruits by the men in their barrack room, either out of charity or to avoid collective punishment. In the case of Blatchford’s enlistment, the NCOs and fellow recruits who greeted him proved to be intimidating; it was an old soldier in the cot next to Blatchford’s who took care of him and offered some advice and guidance.⁷⁷

The old soldiers and the fellow recruits the men met upon enlistment evidently had a considerable impact on both their outlook on the army and on what it meant to be a soldier. The influence the men had on each other never lost its potency nor failed to influence the perceptions of the individual on the army as a society. In such cases, the descriptions proffered ranged from positive and charitable to more acrimonious. Blatchford recalls the men of his barrack room by both their physical appearances, describing them as burly, jolly, ugly and beautiful, and their traits of personality, which varied from smart and good humoured to simple, illiterate and ruled by beer.⁷⁸ The recollections of fellow soldiers presented in the later memoirs are in general more negative than in earlier accounts; such a shift suggests a possible decline in the social standards of the barrack room following the Cardwell-Childers Reforms.

⁷⁶ Acland, *Through the Ranks to a Commission*, p.19.

⁷⁷ Blatchford, *My Life in the Army*, pp.12-16.

⁷⁸ Blatchford, *My Life in the Army*, pp.39-40.

What sets accounts of service in the 1850s and 1860s apart from those serving from the 1870s onwards is both the presence of the short-service soldier and the loss of the long-service soldier. Mole's description of his fellow barrack-room occupants is notably different from Blatchford's, who enlisted nearly thirty years later. In Mole's account there is a strong tone of reverence and respect for the older soldiers who, though far from fine examples of education or refinement, bore the scars of experience and endurance. 'There were fifteen men in my mess', states Mole, 'fourteen of whom wore three or four medals. They were good hearted fellows in the main, though a little short tempered; and all bore signs of long residence in India where the regiment had been for eighteen months without coming home.'⁷⁹

Whether the estimation of one's fellow soldier was positive or negative depended on the experiences of the individual. There was, however, an underlying tone of suspicion and gentle mistrust in the barrack room which was perpetuated by the officers. As Wyndham recalls, he was advised by his commanding officer upon first joining his regiment to not make too many friends as they would only drink his beer and smoke his tobacco, and not to run to the colour-sergeant too often as this would soon label him as someone looking to curry favour.⁸⁰ Despite this advice, however, Wyndham claims he found his barrack-mates to be friendly and good natured, if lacking in table manners.

The CO's advice was not without merit. Several other memoirs, as it has been shown, talk of the pressures put on the men, not only by the temptation of drink but the behaviour of the men seeking it. As Pindar testifies, competition between men wishing to advance and the occasional use of underhand tactics did have the ability to cause

⁷⁹ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, pp. 29-30.

⁸⁰ Wyndham, *The Queen's Service*, p.25.

tensions. In one such instance, Pindar recounts the competition for promotion, the scrupulous adherence to the rules this precipitated in the NCOs in particular and the bitterness such activity could create: ‘If the corporal allows one defaulter to get one pint of malt liquor he runs the risk of being reported to his superiors by some officious parasite because every regiment contains a few of each characters, who glory to build up a name on the fallen fortunes of their military contemporaries’.⁸¹ Since promotion generally required the opening of a vacancy in the same rank, competition and suspicion became likely bedfellows.

As often as the men recount the occasional unpleasantness amongst their fellow servicemen, they also describe close bonds which in many cases, were a strong counter to the lure of promotion. Pindar illustrates such tensions as he recalls resisting the offer of a lance-corporal stripe because its award entailed a transfer away from his company and barrack-mates.⁸² Despite the faults the soldier had, they were not all-encompassing and the camaraderie which existed between the men, for the most part, outweighed the tensions the confines of barrack life created between them. This was not confined to the first company a man served with either. Pindar later admits that, having been forced to accept the promotion and transfer, he found his new comrades to be good men and sociable. When he was later asked if he would care to re-join his old company, he declined.

For Acland, a ‘gentleman ranker’, the memory of his barrack-mates involves some common complaints, for example, their unsavoury eating habits: ‘I kept my eyes on my own plate, as the manners and customs at the “table of the British private” are not

⁸¹ Pindar, *Autobiography of a Private Soldier*, p.73.

⁸² Pindar, *Autobiography of a Private Soldier*, p.67.

always conducive to giving an outsider a good appetite'.⁸³ In the case of Acland, his social background is of importance in interpreting his account of life in the barrack room. He spent a minimal spell there before transferring on to become an NCO and eventually a commissioned officer. The recollections he offers, therefore, present a further dimension, as an 'outsider', to the general character of his fellow privates. In addition to table manners, Acland highlights the occasional altercations which erupted amongst the men, even those supposedly friends and often over relatively trivial matters. Alongside other glimpses Acland offers, particularly where alcohol was concerned, the perspective of Tommy Atkins becomes rather more volatile.⁸⁴

CONCLUSION

The memoir was, by nature, a vehicle of communication for the veteran. Several examples admit as such in their prefaces, noting that the growth in civilian fascination with military life presented an opportunity to inform the public about its realities. As a result, their content mirrors closely the wider civilian debate surrounding the army. As the *Broad Arrow* has highlighted, the soldiers were engaged to a considerable degree with the discussion of their status in the press and were acutely conscious of the War Office reforms which had affected them. The Cardwell-Childers Reforms were not opposed in the memoirs. Instead, specific schemes were criticised but the reforms as a whole were accepted as necessary. Short service in particular suffers under the veterans' testimonies. The accounts of low-level indiscipline and bullying, combined with the erosion of a barrack-room hierarchy which exacted a degree of deference towards older and more experienced soldiers, indicate that the impact of the scheme was at least in part detrimental to army life.

⁸³ Acland, *Through the Ranks to a Commission*, p.94.

⁸⁴ Acland, *Through the Ranks to a Commission*, pp. 194-198.

The insight the military memoir offers into the closed world of the rank-and-file is of particular value. Having been written for publication, there is the risk that the impressions on offer are sanitised versions, however, the availability of several examples alongside further accounts offered in the civilian press, enable their credibility to be established. As with the reforms, the memoirs offer some opposition to criticism directed against fellow soldiers by the government and public, but as a whole accept that the army was a large institution with a variety of characters in its ranks. The memoirs sought to inform more than to chastise, with the exception of ‘Welsh’ perhaps. They demonstrate how complex the social composition of the barrack room could be and how, through a shared military identity, the soldiers were able coexist with relative harmony. The memoirs also offer further insights into the soldier’s place beyond the confines of the army. The final chapter of this thesis will explore the soldier’s attitudes regarding the civilian.

CHAPTER NINE

PUBLISHED THOUGHTS II:

TOMMY ATKINS AND THE BRITISH PUBLIC

INTRODUCTION

The *Broad Arrow* military newspaper and the military memoirs explored in this thesis demonstrate the considerable extent to which the late-Victorian rank-and-file engaged with the support and criticism to which the army was subjected on a regular basis by the British public. In many cases, considerable exception was taken to it. There was no delusion amongst military men that the soldier was anything like a paragon of virtue or a misrepresented victim of unfounded attacks from the civilian world; the memoirs readily admit to the many vices and short comings in the collective character and acknowledged the virtue in attracting ‘a better class of recruit’. What comes across distinctly however, is the soldier’s perception of the ignorance with which the army’s critics formed their judgements. The soldier would argue that, whilst not a perfect specimen, he and his comrades were the product of the society from which they came. In many cases, their vices were shared by their civilian counterparts but, through the constraints of military law, any transgression was more readily held against them.

In the course of the soldiers’ memoirs and diaries, their interactions with different communities are frequent topics for thought and reminiscence. Despite spending a considerable portion of their time within barracks when stationed at home, the local populace generally exerted some impact on the soldiers, even if it was limited to the interest roused when the regiment departed or arrived at a new location. The men were often granted short-term passes, privileges which increased with seniority and good conduct to allow them to leave the barracks and enjoy the hostelries and music halls of

the town in which they were stationed. As a result, a familiarity and relationship existed between the local inhabitants and soldiers, whether it be a general awareness of the presence of men belonging to a certain regiment or corps, or, in the case of longer-term postings or periods spent close to home, more individual and personal acquaintances. The presence of such associations pepper the military memoirs. Though not a fundamental feature of barrack life, the divisions from civilian life still being considerable, they indicate a presence which the military man occupied in the mind of the civilian and visa-versa.

This final chapter will expand on the soldiers' perspectives developed in Section III, shifting the focus onto Tommy Atkins's relationship with the civilian, as the soldier perceived it. It will be demonstrated that animosity between the soldier and the civilian was not universal; the memoirs commonly describe positive interactions with local populations they encountered during service around the British Isles. Moreover, it becomes apparent that the greatest tensions arose largely through the fault of the army itself as poorly reimbursed billets imposed the soldier on the civilian and the civilian's discontent back upon the soldier. The civil-military relationship, as the memoirs and diaries of the soldiers suggest, was not guaranteed to be strained. If it was, however, the soldiers did not shy away from provocation.

CIVILITY BETWEEN THE SOLDIER AND THE CIVILIAN

Despite tensions which persisted between the army and the civilian world throughout the latter nineteenth century, the experiences of individual soldiers were not universally negative and suggest a lesser level of disengagement than the British Army's presence at home might often indicate. This is evidenced by the apparent comprehension of the role

and importance of military rank among civilians. For example, Acland references in his writing a willingness in garrison towns to offer segregated drinking spaces for NCOs and Privates. This allowed the sergeants the freedom to attend public establishments without the fear of the accusation of associating with inferior ranks, a practice which was strictly forbidden by military law.¹ For Pindar also, an understanding of the importance of military rank and hierarchy was clearly demonstrable in the civilian ladies he met in Ireland, for whom the sergeant always appealed over the private:

If a private soldier is paying his enduring addresses to an Irish girl, she'll give him up whenever a sergeant presents himself for matrimonial honours. A sergeant, however ugly, has no difficulty in procuring a handsome wife in Ireland, while a young recruit would have a formidable task to secure the same.²

In neither Pindar's nor Acland's account could it be argued that the civilian population was intimate with military hierarchy, but what is apparent is a sufficient level of engagement with the army for rank to be of significance. Moreover, there is a sense of respect for the military hierarchy and a willingness to identify the sergeant as a customer worth attracting or a husband worth acquiring over or in addition to the private.

In relation to the movement of troops around the country and the interaction of the army with civilians not of garrison towns and therefore not in common contact with the military, the experiences described by the authors and diarists were also not universally negative. For Woolard the experience of being sent with his regiment to Wales to assist against a colliery strike was one of amusement. As he later noted in his diary, the locals and workers from the neighbouring steel and iron industries gathered around the soldiers

¹ Acland, *Through the Ranks to a Commission*, p.148.

² Pindar, *Autobiography of a Private Soldier*, p.49.

with interest and appeared pleased by their presence. Woolard even wondered whether they had ever seen a soldier before.³

For Pindar, his experiences in Ireland, for the most part, were equally amiable. On one particular occasion, the magistrate of Mitchelstown sent a letter to the colonel following a brief period the regiment spent there, commending the conduct of the soldiers. This pleased Pindar and his comrades particularly, he states, in light of the less favourable press other regiments in Ireland were receiving.⁴ Both examples, whilst not necessarily indicative of overwhelmingly positive relations between the soldier and civilian populations, do demonstrate that hostility was not the automatic reaction to the presence of the military. Apparent ignorance of the army in the case of Woolard's Welsh populace and the relative familiarity with it of the townsfolk of Mitchelstown suggests that curiosity played an important part in the civilian reaction to the soldier's presence and even if out of relief and surprise, the good conduct of a regiment could receive notice and recognition as readily as poor conduct.

If amicable relations did exist between the army and local populaces, they did so particularly with the female population and especially when a regiment was stationed in or passed through a place with a concentrated compliment of women. Mole recalls the town of Dunstable in which his regiment, the 14th Hussars, paused whilst marching from Hounslow to Edinburgh in 1867. Dunstable was home to the straw plaiting industry which employed in the region of one-thousand women who, Mole explains, took great interest in the soldiers and would compete to walk on the arm of one. There would be cases of six women escorting one soldier and fighting for the pick of the men. When the

³ NAM: MS Diary: Woolard, 'Journal'.

⁴ Pindar, *Autobiography of a Private Soldier*, p.66.

regiment moved out the following morning, says Mole, there was widespread sobbing and crying.⁵ Mole makes no mention of the menfolk of Dunstable, jealousies and rivalries seem not to have concerned the soldiers in the least, but relations with the women appear to have been high.

The movement of a regiment across country introduced more disparate civilian populations to the military. Similar stimulation of public interest and goodwill was achieved closer to the garrison by way of route marches and other military displays and field days. The use of field days, military marching bands and ceremonial presentations was potent in drumming up support and excitement for the army. For the soldiers involved also, such activities could be valuable in encouraging personal pride, comradeship and lessening the gulf between the military and civilian psyche. Davies identifies the route march, which involved the entire regiment mustering and marching twelve to fourteen miles in full uniform for the dual purpose of exercise and public display, as one he found particular pleasure in engaging in:

I used to like route marching; it gives the opportunity to the soldier of “swelling his chest”, which he does not forget to do when marching gaily through the streets of a town in England, to the martial and stirring strains of the military band, knowing full well that many a bright eye is regarding him with approval.⁶

This mutual sharing of the military spectacle between civilian and soldier also took place on a more leisurely and sociable basis and encouraged free association and friendly competition. Joseph Willerton Beeton recalls as part of his transcribed diaries the time his family accompanied him to Jersey. There, Beeton was part of the regimental firing team which participated in competitions with a local team ‘The Jersey Cracks’.⁷

⁵ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King’s Hussar*, p.65.

⁶ Davies, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad*, p.13.

⁷ NAM: MS Diary: J. Willerton-Beeton, Staff-Sergeant, ‘Diary’ (c.1880), 2009-08-29.

As with Davies's route march, Beeton's daughter comments in her annotated notes on the positive experiences the soldiers had with local civilians in the context of sport and in terms of the internal camaraderie this promoted.

For the soldier, the most consistent point at which he might expect to receive praise and congratulation from the public was when the regiment departed for foreign duty. When leaving for war, the crowds were inevitably larger, but in any case there was always some cheering and outward expressions of approval when the army marched to the station or the docks and such occasions arguably constituted the most positive in terms of civilian and military interactions. Gowing recalls watching his regiment embark for the Crimean War shortly after his enlistment in 1854:

In marching out of the barracks at Manchester to the railway station, one could have walked over the heads of the people who were wrought up to such a pitch of excitement as almost amounted to madness. Our inspiring band in front struck up 'The British Grenadier', 'The Girl I Left Behind Me', 'We Are Going Far Away'. Fathers shook hands with their sons and bade them farewell, while mothers embraced them; and the band struck up 'Cheer, Boys, Cheer'.⁸

The fervour of the crowds described by Gowing was undoubtedly in no small measure down to the excitement of a nation at war and the expansion of militaristic enthusiasm and engagement which accompanied it. Such scenes were not uncommon however and not reliant on the soldiers being well known or local. Mole describes a similar scene which greeted his regiment as they departed Hounslow for Edinburgh with crowds turning out to say goodbye to the soldiers with whom they had developed friendships through barrack dances and troop events and amateur theatricals.⁹

⁸ Gowing, *A Soldier's Experience*, p.11.

⁹ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, pp. 63-64.

Brunlees-Patterson comments on the enthusiastic farewell the army received upon embarkation, the atmosphere created by the regiment and the marching band and the enthusiasm of the ladies as they proceeded, 'in the presence of a large concourse of spectators in which the feminine elite of the town largely predominates'.¹⁰ Mole was also struck by the crowds who turned out in 1874 to watch his regiment march from the camp at Aldershot to the train station, bound for Portsmouth and then India.¹¹ Even without the excitement of a war to encourage spectators, the presence of the army in public marching out and the presence of the public bearing witness to the soldier's departure had a mutual impact.

THE SOLDIER AND THE CIVILIAN ARE UNCIVIL

Although it was possible for a regiment to enjoy a harmonious reception when travelling across the country, the soldier was more likely to meet with hostility than a warm welcome. The most acute point at which tensions arose was at the billet. Broadly speaking the accommodation sought when beyond the reach of barracks was the tavern, pub or hotel. As several of the memoirs firmly emphasise, whether it was a good billet or a bad billet depended on the landlord. The presence of soldiers was frequently an unwelcome one. Ironically, this was one of the few instance in which civilian and soldier might have seen eye-to-eye. For it is admitted by the soldiers in their reminiscences that whilst they disliked the hostility which met them on their arrival, they appreciated that their presence was an imposition on the landlord when considered in light of the poor recompense the War Office offered for the trouble.

¹⁰ Brunlees-Patterson, *Life in the Ranks of the British Army in India and on Board a Troopship*, p.13.

¹¹ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, pp.211-215.

Wyndham comments on his eventual sympathy with the landlord who was required to provide food and accommodation to him and another corporal when they were sent to Lancaster to collect a deserter from their regiment: 'The proprietor did not seem pleased to see us, which I considered very natural when I learned that he was compelled to provide us with a hot meal for a most infinitesimal sum'.¹² Mole further corroborates Wyndham's observation. The movement of his regiment from Hounslow to Edinburgh afforded him ample opportunity to experience both good and bad billets. Mole outlines just how poorly the landlords were remunerated. One inn was paid ten pence for a hot meal and a bed for the night and four pence for two pints of 'small beer' or one pint of ale. In the case of the 14th Hussars who required facilities for their horses also, a further two shillings was paid per horse in return for eight pounds of straw, ten pounds of corn and twelve pounds of hay.¹³ Considerable irritation is expressed by the soldiers in their memoirs as they appreciate that the awkward situation in which they often found themselves might have been avoided if reasonable provision was allowed for by the military authorities.

Despite this, however, Mole emphasises the impact the landlord's attitude had on whether it was a happy arrangement or not. In the case of a kindly landlord couple he encountered - Mole suspects their warmth was partly due to their son being a soldier of the line - he states that he and his men were extra careful and courteous during their stay. However, Mole describes another innkeeper who was surly and reluctant and required cajoling by their officers into accepting them. Having had the law read to him, he responded in kind by giving the men lodgings to the 'letter of the law' and therefore providing only meat, salt and pepper as specified without the customary vegetables or

¹² Wyndham, *The Queen's Service*, p.88.

¹³ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, pp.63-64.

potatoes. The soldiers applied a mantra of treating the billet as they were received; ‘Of course we had to lump it as best we could and we were not sorry that the “rats” got to his harness that night and nibbled holes in it and the “cats” and “foxes” played havoc with his fowl-house’.¹⁴

Welsh corroborates further the testimonies of Mole and Wyndham, explaining that despite soldiers appreciating the reasons for hostile receptions they would not accept mistreatment through prejudice. If it was a bad billet, Welsh explains, the soldiers would live up to their uncharitable reputation and treat the establishment roughly and inconvenience the landlord where possible. If it was a good billet and the reception was amiable, then the men took extra care and were polite and courteous. Furthermore, Welsh suggests that the presence of soldiers could actually be profitable for their host, especially for establishments which served drink. In a good billet the soldiers would stay and drink where they were housed which, further to the additional custom this entailed, often attracted more people in the form of curious locals keen to enjoy the novelty of drinking and talking with soldiers. If it were a bad billet, they would simply drink elsewhere.¹⁵

The region and local prosperity also impacted the receptions soldiers seeking billets met and the relationship which was struck. Mole notes the change in manner of residents when he crossed the border into Scotland. Edinburgh was friendly, he claims, but the hospitality he received north of the Tweed was inferior to that south of it. ‘The people were different, their manner being colder whilst the accommodation for our horses and ourselves was poorer than it had been... We were chiefly fed of mutton of which we

¹⁴ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King’s Hussar*, p.67.

¹⁵ Welsh, *Recollections of an Old Soldier*, pp.80-83.

soon turned mortally tired.¹⁶ This is somewhat surprising considering the generally more robust relationship between the Scottish peoples and the military, although the Highland regiments naturally garnered the most support. Greater poverty seems the likeliest explanation for the deterioration in the hospitality the soldiers experienced but poor attitudes were not readily forgiven. He recalls with scorn having asked for some cheese or some mustard to make the boiled mutton neck and hard dumplings they had been served more palatable. His landlady, he notes, exclaimed, ‘What! What! Mustard with mutting! And cheese for soldiers!’, and, as Mole puts it, ‘she bounced out the room in terrible indignation’.¹⁷

The billet presented the soldier with a lottery when it came to the quality of the experience he would have when in close proximity with the civilian world. Such odds characterised the military man’s interaction with the British public throughout his career. The experiences drawn on so far have sought to demonstrate that hostility was not the sole attitude to greet the soldier who ventured out of barracks. It was however, more common. The memoirs describe experiencing at various times a combination of suspicion, ridicule and dislike from the very commencement of their military service. Once again, such attitudes were not without some merit and as the discussion of the soldier and drink illustrated, individually they could be deserving of the scorn they received. Furthermore, if the practice of playing up to negative stereotypes to punish bad billets was adopted in the soldier’s more general dealings with an unpredictable public then it is not difficult to see how many of the public’s prejudices were compounded.

¹⁶ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King’s Hussar*, pp.68.

¹⁷ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King’s Hussar*, pp.68-69.

It would certainly be accurate to surmise that the young British soldier was not given the benefit of the doubt and did not stand an overwhelming chance of convincing a cynical public of his good nature. This is demonstrated by the number of memoirs which, in the process of recounting the experience of enlistment, recall instances of spite and mockery to which they were subjected by unkind civilians. This is most frequently cited in the context of the newly attested man approaching railway staff looking to board a train to their new regiment.

Robert Blatchford remembers the treatment he and his new comrades received when they reported to the officials at Waterloo Station; ‘They seemed to regard us as they would a troop of monkeys. They met us with smiles of contemptuous amusement; put us into a sort of cattle-box with a seat down the centre, and locked us up’.¹⁸ The travel provision laid on for the young soldiers was complicit in such uncharitable treatment; the very act of locking them into their carriage did not aid in dispelling the perception that soldiers were criminally inclined. The attitudes communicated by those railway staff were perceptible to the soldiers however, who had been attested for only a matter of hours and immediately public regard for the military was demonstrated to them in negative tones, which Blatchford did not forget.

The disapproval directed at many of the young recruits could be expressed even *before* they had enlisted. The Kentish recruit was required to head from his home town to Canterbury to report at the barracks there and enlist. As Blatchford, who enlisted at a similar time had experienced, the young man was subjected to a degree of ridicule and condescension by a railway official; ““Oh”, he said with a sneering grin, “I suppose

¹⁸ Blatchford, *My Life in the Army*, p.9.

you're a 'cruity; well I pity you.'".¹⁹ The soldier describes his indignation at the comment, although he does also admit how he later acknowledged that the man's pity was not misplaced once the tough life of the recruit came to light.

Moode experienced similar treatment when he enlisted in Edinburgh in 1878. Rather than a rail worker however, Moode's mistreatment came from the magistrate appointed to formalise his attestation: 'He shook his head as he looked at me and said "Here's another man for his ruin".'²⁰ The message which is communicated strongly from such accounts is that to become a soldier was at best foolishness and at worst the mark of a bad character. There was little or no suspension of judgement or willingness to concede that any man might become a fine or a despicable soldier. This attitude was identified by the soldiers and resented. Nor was it temporary or localised. John Pindar recalls in his memoirs how those wishing to enlist, to serve in the Crimean War even, would often feel compelled to travel to the nearest towns of Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy to do so as they would be considered blackguards if they joined up at home.²¹

Class was no guarantee of hostility or hospitality. The fact that the War Office reforms under Cardwell and Childers sought to convince the working classes of Britain that the army offered a respectable career is evidence that this was the target class for recruiting for the ranks. Negative attitudes towards the army were sufficiently high in that demographic to warrant address but they were not universally so, in that class or across society. As Mole discovered in Dublin, lower-middle class attitudes could often be more sympathetic where the army was concerned than the working-class, despite the latter being more closely connected:

¹⁹ Anon, 'A Kentish Soldier' in Palmer, *Rambling Soldier*, p.61.

²⁰ Moode, *A Soldier's Life and Experiences in the British Army*, p.4.

²¹ Pindar, *Autobiography of a Private Soldier*, pp.4-5.

I found the people of this city [of Dublin] quite different to what I had expected. Amongst the lower classes a soldier in uniform appeared to be a mark for all the scurrilous abuse the Irish tongue could command, but with the lower-middle classes a well conducted man who steered clear of discussing politics, could always be sure of very pleasant company.²²

The soldier's interaction with the civilian world was limited and often lacked depth or intimacy. There was sufficient exposure however for the soldiers to appreciate the uncharitable way to which they were often referred, either through direct instances of discrimination and abuse or broader gestures made by a community or its spokesman. For example, for John Pindar, who had been so delighted at the letter of commendation which had been sent to his commanding officer by the magistrate of Mitchelstown in Ireland, there was also frustration. The priest of that town openly adopted a policy by which he would publicly denounce 'in no measured terms' during his weekly service the name of any local woman who had had a 'clandestine meeting' with a soldier. Pindar demonstrates some degree of benevolence as he states that the priest was 'of the old school' and a 'good man' but also defends his fellow soldiers as he writes:

I can tell him...or any gentleman that wears his cloth, that soldiers are not the abandoned wretches we are sometimes called. I have known the service to make honest men of civil rogues; but out of the great number of men who annually leave the army we hear of few of them turning out scoundrels and vagabonds.²³

Despite Pindar's robust response, actions such as those of the Mitchelstown priest had a demonstrable effect on the soldiers, particularly those who viewed themselves as separate and above their baser comrades. Pindar's statement echoes a recurrent and cogent theme of several of the memoirs and diaries, a desire to present definition and detail to the character of Tommy Atkins and dissuade the automatic disregard they suffered.

²² Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, p.84.

²³ Pindar, *Autobiography of a Private Soldier*, p.65.

The army's unpopularity was something which the soldiers were aware of and they knew the reasons even if there was little they could do to persuade the public to change their opinion. Menzies acted for several years as a recruiting sergeant for the 45th Nottinghamshire Regiment and offers a particularly effective demonstration of the impossible position the late-nineteenth century army faced in terms of popular image and reception. As a recruiting officer in particular, Menzies had an additional mark to his name which singled him out for further abuse, not only for his own character as a soldier but also the role he personally played in admitting others into the military. Ill treatment was something he received across the country in the variety places in which he operated. The task of recruiting, as Section I has highlighted, was held in particularly low regard by the public:

Between alternate turns of recruiting and doing duty at the depot, I spent some years on home service, during which time I enlisted many fine young fellows...[from cities across the country] and there is much to humiliate in the remembrances of the depravity witnessed, the insults borne and resented, and the excesses indulged in, in connection with recruiting work.²⁴

Menzies offers an example which illustrates one cause of the soldier's unpopularity. It relates directly to his role as a recruiting sergeant and the discomfort he felt in meeting the families of fallen soldiers he himself had recruited. One man in particular stood out for Menzies as he explains, 'This young fellow was rejected on his first application on account of his youth and slight build, but was also dismissed with the advice to try again in six months. This he did, was approved and joined the regiment only to perish with it. Many a time afterwards did I meet his poor mother, and bitter were the tears

²⁴ Menzies, *Reminiscences of an Old Soldier*, p.25.

she shed over her only son'.²⁵ If mothers and families mourned the loss of a son who had enlisted or been killed in action, this sorrow could be communicated to few military men except the ever present recruiting sergeant. That the boy had gone to ruin upon enlistment the sergeant would hardly have agreed with and that he had been killed was not something he could help but as Menzies recollects, her mourning had few avenues of expression.

The recruiting sergeant was a common and highly charged symbol of the soldier's presence in public life, however, the requirement that all men wore their uniforms when out in public meant that few soldiers gained anonymity when in civilian company unless granted leave to wear civilian clothes when on furlough. It is noted in several of the memoirs which recall in detail the process of enlisting that when the recruit's uniform and kit are issued, the civilian garments the man attested in are confiscated, rarely to be seen again. This was intended to make desertion more difficult. For some men it mattered little and the excitement of receiving the uniform which they had long coveted dominates their recollections. For others, however, it was rather more symbolic of the surrendering of their old life and persona in favour of a soldier's.

The question of uniform in public is raised frequently in Acland's memoir. For the gentleman ranker, the wearing of a private's, corporal's or even sergeant's uniform in public and in the civilian company he kept was a particular issue, although he denies being ashamed of his tunic. In Acland's case, he took the precaution of leaving a

²⁵ Menzies, *Reminiscences of an Old Soldier*, pp. 24-25.

portmanteau with a friend containing a change of clothes for when he was going home or leaving the garrison town:

I started from the H.Q. in uniform, but having obtained leave to wear plain clothes during my furlough I armed myself with my portmanteau and changed in the railway carriage and thus once more appeared a “respectable” member of society.²⁶

As a gentleman ranker, Acland’s social status caused additional anxiety when he ventured into public in a ranker’s uniform. His unwillingness to do so was not representative of the general attitudes soldiers had to their uniforms which was generally one of pride. The problems the uniform brought with it however affected more than just the gentleman. Despite improvements in the social status of the soldier during the 1880s and 1890s, individual soldiers did find that the uniform could open them up to abuse and prejudice just as the recruiting sergeant had described. The disadvantage in wearing a redcoat was brought home to Davies in the early 1890s on the day of his discharge. He left the barracks at Gosport, headed for Portsmouth and, being unfamiliar with the area, asked a policeman for directions and only to be rudely brushed off. Later that evening he returned in his new civilian clothes and was treated quite differently on account, argues Davies, that he was now a ‘Mr’.²⁷

THE SOLDIER’S RESPONSE TO THE PUBLIC

The authors of these diaries and memoirs were conscious of the negative attitudes civilians held towards them and refer to specific examples in their recollections. Furthermore, several examples, especially those written for publication, offer some level of response, criticism and even direct challenge to their opponents and naysayers.

²⁶ Acland, *Through the Ranks to a Commission*, pp.116-119.

²⁷ Davies, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad*, p.6.

Such instances range from mild comments suggesting attacks levelled at the army were unfounded, through to more impassioned diatribes accusing the civilian of ignorance, selfishness and cowardice. As Welsh angrily announces in the preface to his volume:

I have heard about the common soldier of the British Army from the officer and civilian source, and I will say that their opinions are ignorant, for neither are well enough acquainted, and, as a rule, are not interested enough in the subject.²⁸

The accusation of ignorance on the part of civilian critic is a common one and certainly underlines the greatest sense of grievance the soldiers held in terms of their treatment. When applied to the quite complex mixture of attitudes which have been explored in this chapter, which constitute the contradictory self-identity of the soldier as a deeply flawed yet respectable individual and collective, the ignorance of the civilian draws them together to form a more logical portrait. Many of the soldier's vices are the vices of the civilian also, only magnified by the nature of military life and discipline and the low expectations levelled at the army from the outset. Civilian ignorance of the intricacies of army life prevented the military from presenting the soldier's character as a whole, vices and flaws alongside heroism and duty and more importantly, monotony and routine. Fundamental to the soldiers' response is the retort, the civilian is ignorant.

As well as the discriminatory treatment they suffered as a result of the general assumptions made on their trustworthiness and character, the memoirs also identify a broader misapprehension and misunderstanding of what it meant to be a soldier. What is striking is that the prevailing perception of the life of the soldier, as identified by the authors themselves, is not one of glory, action and heroism but one of servitude, monotony and discipline the likes of which compared favourably only to conditions in a prison. What set the two existences apart was the coalescing effect of the regimental

²⁸ Welsh, *Recollections of an Old Soldier*, p.v.

system and shared pride and identity of the soldier. In his opening statements, Robert Blatchford identifies the enduring image of the soldier he perceives to be harboured by the public and expresses his wish to dispel it:

I can see in a glass darkly, that to the man in the street the army is a thing radically different from my army. Perhaps to that man in the street it is as a dull routine, a tyranny of iron discipline, a soulless round of pipe-clay and beer and goose-step. To him my dear old Tommy Atkins is an uneducated, unintelligent, wooden automaton who soaps his heart, kisses servant girls, revels in bad beer and treats the King's English as ruthlessly as the King's enemies.²⁹

This is not the army he knew, argues Blatchford. It is the perception he believes the public to hold as true. It is clear that Blatchford draws a direct correlation between the perception that the army offered an unappealing prospect for the respectable young man and the calibre of the recruits it thereby enlisted. A lack of intimacy with life in the military on the part of the civilian again constitutes a fundamental source of frustration, one which is openly addressed through the military memoir.

Conversely, however, the complaint is also raised that when soldiers made known the difficult conditions in which they lived, they were ignored by the public or dismissed as grumbling, without the facts being examined. When addressing the issue of the low status of the soldier in his memoirs, Wyndham retorts,

It is no answer to say that soldiers are always discontented and grumbling. I am convinced that it is nothing of the sort. In the opinion of those who know him best, the British soldier... is a man who uncomplainingly endures a far greater amount of hardship and discomfort (often attended by actual danger) than do those who find it so easy to label him "discontented".³⁰

²⁹ Blatchford, *My Life in the Army*, p.3.

³⁰ Wyndham, *The Queen's Service*, pp.302-303.

Once again, ignorance is at the heart of this accusation. This time the complaint rests on an unwillingness to address and alleviate the problems in army life, rather than an unwillingness to acknowledge that the dismal image commonly subscribed to might be exaggerated. The upshot in either case however, according to the soldiers' memoirs, is that the army and the soldier were derided by civilians, based on the conditions in which they existed, without any engagement with the realities of those conditions.

The issue of alcohol presents an acute source of resentment in many of the memoirs and constitutes a common root for the complaint that civilians were ignorant of the realities of life as a soldier. The most frequent retort is that civilians drank as much as soldiers. The presence of alcohol was widely recognised among soldiers to be a major vice prevalent among their comrades. The key difference was not consumption but discipline; civilians were not subject to the same severe regulations. In his memoirs, Pindar recites a conversation he had with a fellow Scottish soldier when both were out past morning tattoo. Pindar explains that life in their home garrison of Edinburgh was particularly difficult because there were greater temptations from civilian friends unrestricted by military law. His friend complained about the injustice in the way drunk soldiers were written off by a hostile public:

“A redcoat be seen but once on the public streets in a state of intoxication and he's considered no fit tae associate with the civil portion of the community.”

Pindar replies, “What nonsense ye speak Mankey. Are you not just after leaving a social bacchanalian band of brothers down the street there?”

“Yes, I left *them* happy enough, but they've nae commanding officer tae confront and hear the doom pronounced o' seven days in the cells an' ten confined tae barracks for appearing drunk on the streets.”³¹

³¹ Pindar, *Autobiography of a Private Soldier*, pp.39-40.

Welsh attempts to highlight the necessity which led soldiers to drink and the hypocrisy of the civilians who would condemn them and yet themselves drink. Whilst the unhealthy climates, unsanitary drinking water and monotonous lifestyle might lead a soldier to drink, Welsh argues, the civilian has no such excuse.³² Furthermore, Welsh accuses civilians of drinking secretly at home and around young families, whereas the soldier always drinks out in the open and in the company of adults. Also, the soldier may spend all his money on drink in one evening and still be housed and fed the next day, unlike the civilian. Ultimately, Welsh suggests that a soldier's drinking is a product of civilian drinking and that society should change if it expects soldiers to do so also. Whilst this response does not fully take into account the consequences of too much alcohol consumption for the civilian, which as Pindar points out could include the loss of employment and more, nor the prevalence of drinking among different class and local affiliations, Welsh launches a direct and forceful assault on the civilian attitude to soldiers and drink.³³

The issue of discipline, or rather the public conception of army discipline, was a further source of frustration which was articulated, among other mediums such as the military periodical, through the memoirs. Coupled with drink, the army perceived the military justice system to be a key factor in perpetuating the stereotype that soldiers were prone to criminal activity. This was primarily as result, it is argued, of the limited knowledge the civilian had of the difference in definition of crime and punishment in the army as compared to the civil justice system. Wyndham claims that to the civilian,

³² Welsh, *Recollections of an Old Soldier*, pp.56-62.

³³ Welsh, *Recollections of an Old Soldier*, pp.56-62.

the term court-martial was often misconceived as something ‘mysterious and terrible’.³⁴

In attempting to highlight the different attitudes, Wyndham explains that when a civilian commits a petty crime and receives fourteen days or a month hard labour sure enough he receives scant sympathy from his friends. But, he states, ‘when a young so-and-so who ‘listed not long since is to be tried by court martial they immediately conclude that he is to be shot, or at any rate to be imprisoned for the remainder of his natural existence’.³⁵ Instead, Wyndham informs his readers, court-martials are designed to deliver rapid and effective discipline and that ‘crime’ in the army is very different in nature and severity than civilian crime and therefore did not necessarily indicate a bad character. The resounding message communicated through the memoirs is that the civilian was not fully aware of what life in the army entailed and that the fault rested with the public’s misapprehensions, not the soldier.

The memoirs at times demonstrate a clear sensitivity to the issue of discrimination. After considering the important role the army had played in the British Empire and the sacrifice servicemen had made in its cause, Davies points out that the reward the soldier received was not praise and gratitude:

No; quite the reverse. It is only too true that the finger of scorn is raised at a man for no other reason save that he is a common soldier. Surely this is very unjust. An honest and manly heart can beat beneath a redcoat, as well as under the starched shirt of the civilian. Not very long ago a notice had to be taken down which read as follows: - “soldiers and dogs not admitted”, and how common is the notice, “soldiers in uniform not admitted or served”, every careful observer knows...I cannot understand

³⁴ Wyndham, *The Queen’s Service*, p.91.

³⁵ Wyndham, *The Queen’s Service*, p.91.

the extreme aversion which many people express towards soldiers, unless it is that they judge the whole flock by the few black sheep.³⁶

The question of uniform is one which arises in several of the soldier's memoirs as they identify the common exception taken to the sight of a redcoat. This gave rise to a double insult for the soldier by demonstrating contempt for the ideas for which he served and the fraternity to which he belonged and also, as Davies states, by suggesting a general dismissal of the soldier on the basis of the minority's poor conduct.

Wyndham echoes Davies's sentiments arguing further that standards, which appeared to cause such distress to the public, would not improve until attitudes towards the uniform were addressed.³⁷ Welsh protests that to some civilians, soldiers were not even considered to be Englishmen and but instead were viewed as savage and blood thirsty. The soldier will never be taken under the 'English family wing' and treated like others with respect, he argues, until a 'foreign enemy lands in the country'.³⁸

Public mistreatment of the soldier did on occasions account for rank, sometimes affording a little more respect to the sergeant than the private, although this was not as a rule. Even such apparently positive instances presented consternation to the soldiers however. As Mole complains, the respectful treatment of the sergeant and the disrespectful treatment of the private further demonstrated the ignorance of the public and the error of their judgement: 'the former is always expected to act as a gentleman, and treated as such, whereas the latter is often looked down upon as if he belonged to a

³⁶ Davies, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad*, pp.5-6.

³⁷ Wyndham, *The Queen's Service*, pp.302-304.

³⁸ Welsh, *Recollections of an Old Soldier*, p.105.

lower caste altogether, although both originally came from the same class; nor is it always the best man who wears the stripe'.³⁹

Soldiers' criticism of their public denouncers went beyond the prejudicial treatment of soldiers and the degradation of the uniform. Several authors chose to directly attack the behaviour of British society and highlight, further to the ignorance which coloured their opinions of the army, their unpatriotic, selfish and ungrateful behaviour. Certain authors went so far as to dismiss public criticism and instead draw direct links between the supposedly poor class of man to be found in the army and the state of society as a whole. Welsh argues this point most strongly:

The army is criticised to such an extent that some of the common soldiers are disgusted. Some say "it is no army"; and others say, "It is not like it used to be". If it is not like it used to be then the fault is with the civilian. Make better men, for the army is as good as any other class of the population.⁴⁰

The intrinsic and economic value of the soldier is also of particular importance to some memoir authors. Capitalism arises relatively frequently and several memoirs draw a direct link between the businessman's wealth and the role the soldier played in ensuring its security. When considered in this perspective, the soldier's grievance is again clear; he does not profit personally in protecting overseas trade systems and yet is derided by the same individuals for whom his efforts do produce a profit. This is a particular gripe for Welsh who repeatedly references the attitudes of businessmen who gain by the army's activities and yet scorn the soldier:

The heaps of money are left for the honest traders, those great men who make England what it is - in their estimation; those honest men who will

³⁹ Compton (ed.), *Edwin Mole: A King's Hussar*, p.122.

⁴⁰ Welsh, *Recollections of an Old Soldier*, pp. 14-15.

not be satisfied with less than twenty-five per cent of the profit, and then frown on the soldier who keeps the foreign ports open for him.⁴¹

Welsh, who is by far the most forthright and outspoken author goes further, attacking the morality and character of civilians who are pleased to profit from the Empire, but unwilling to defend it. His indictments do not fall far short of declaring cowardice and profiteering on the accused. On the basis of economic value and profit generation, the soldiers did not view themselves without purpose or value, an argument which would contradict the continuous debate over government investment in the British Army. Welsh makes a direct challenge to those interested parties to contribute to the defence of their own assets:

If Englishmen make war then they should be prepared to follow it up. If we get dabbling with other people's business, for the sake of trade, then all those who live by trade and barter should supply sons to fill the ranks of the army, which certain sects do not. Strange they will not fight, but will make great fortunes out of our foreign possessions.⁴²

The memoirs examined in this chapter, and most certainly the majority of diaries which were never intended for public consumption, were not intended to represent an attack on the British public by the soldier. In their introductions and prefaces several announce a desire to inform and educate their civilian readership about the realities of life in the army but in general as a means of feeding a latent interest and not to chastise those with misapprehensions. Despite this, the opportunity to express opinions, correct misunderstandings and counter criticism directed at the army was grasped with enthusiasm, especially by Davies, Wyndham and Welsh.

⁴¹ Welsh, *Recollections of an Old Soldier*, p.12.

⁴² Welsh, *Recollections of an Old Soldier by one of the Rank and File*, pp.50-51.

More broadly speaking however, the overriding message was simply a sense that the civilian community was largely ignorant of the military and therein lay the root of the tensions, unpleasantness and discrimination which existed between them. For several of the authors the committal of their recollections and experiences to paper for the consumption of non-military readers represented a valuable step in combatting the limited understanding of the army beyond the barrack and fort walls. Some soldiers went further however, expressing a preference for conscription, or even challenging military doubters and enthusiasts to enlist and see for themselves.⁴³ As Blatchford, in his defence of the soldier and criticism of the unhealthy nature of the confined military lifestyle states, ‘a few hours in the barrack room would teach a civilian more than all the soldier stories ever written’.⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

When examined as a collective, the military memoirs published during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries present an illuminating and informative insight into the soldier’s perspective on himself and his world. Each individual volume or individual diary examined in isolation may offer one interpretation of the realities of army life. But this chapter has demonstrated how closely the memoirs compliment and build upon one another, allowing for the construction of a perception of the Victorian soldier which is derived from multiple authors and yet presents a broadly coherent impression.

The shared identity of the soldier was integral to the military experience. That the regimental family and sense of camaraderie was vital to the cohesion of the British

⁴³ Welsh, *Recollections of an Old Soldier by one of the Rank and File*, pp.86-93.

⁴⁴ Blatchford, *My Life in the Army*, p.119.

Army is not under question. However, what this chapter has highlighted is the complexity of that perceived character and the position it occupied during the period of military reform when such ideas were under active review by the War Office. It is striking that in general, the soldier did not disagree fundamentally with the civilian perception. Each memoir and diary is ready to acknowledge and admit the weaknesses and failings of the military man and few deny outright the accusations so vice often levied at the soldier.

However, the accusation which is communicated strongly from the military memoirs against the civilian population and critics of the soldier in particular is that of ignorance. Whilst the soldiers do not deny the vices of drink and crime of which they are suspected, they argue that the realities are different to the stereotypes. Drink for instance was taken by many soldiers but not by all and in some instances such as unhealthy foreign climes as a precaution. Moreover, drunkenness was a crime in the army when perhaps it would not have been in civil life, a distinction which many of the memoirs attempt to emphasise with regard to crime more generally. In other circumstances, such as billeting, the fault is placed with hostile hosts as much as with the anti-social conduct of the soldier. The memoirs make little secret of their intention to educate the British public in the realities of military life and to both feed curiosity and dispel myth.

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

In 1899 veteran Horace Wyndham bitterly observed, ‘At present it too often appears that “the widow’s uniform” is indeed regarded as “the soldier man’s disgrace”’.¹ Despite the reforming efforts of the War Office, the low social status of the British rank-and-file was never fully remedied. The soldier of 1899 was, however, in a vastly different position to that of his predecessors in 1868. Tommy Atkins and the British Army had become synonymous; the life of the soldier captured the interest of the British public and the serviceman emerged from the shadows of the army institution to assume centre-stage in the nation’s military identity. When in public the ‘widow’s uniform’ could still cause consternation but this became an isolated and increasingly challenged occurrence. This thesis has demonstrated that whilst he was a paradox, the ordinary soldier is not an enigma. In light of the political, social and cultural influences which sought to define him, it has been possible to differentiate and reconcile the various guises in which the soldier was perceived.

WAR OFFICE REFORM VERSUS THE GREAT DEPRESSION

From the War Office perspective, the social rehabilitation of the soldier played an essential role in his intended development. In many respects, however, the government did not succeed in its aims: the army did not establish military service as an appealing career to which the ‘respectable’ working-classes would aspire. Despite the scrutiny, debate and innovation which the reforms to army recruiting encompassed, Cardwell and

¹ Wyndham, *The Queen’s Service*, pp.302-4.

Childers failed to popularise military service principally because the financial incentives were never sufficiently raised.

The War Office recognised the necessity for the army to compete in the domestic labour market for unskilled men. Recruiting reports from 1870 and 1871 highlight the sensitivity of enlistment to rates of employment. A period of depression in the London trade assisted the army's recruitment in 1870.² In contrast, unseasonably steady employment levels in November and December 1871 caused a slowing of the army's recruitment the following year, particularly in manufacturing towns.³ The economic climate of late-Victorian Britain had a profound impact on the army's ability to cultivate its appeal.

The state of the British economy in the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century would, on paper, seem exceptionally favourable to the army's needs. Following a financial boom from 1868 until 1873, the remainder of the nineteenth century was characterised by an economic downturn which would last until the mid-1890s.⁴ Alarmed contemporaries dubbed it the Great Depression. Agriculture struggled acutely in this economic downturn as foreign competition flooded the domestic and overseas markets. Particularly hard-hit were the corn farmers in the South and the West; the value of British corn fell from 55s per quarter in 1874 to 22s 10d by 1894. Meat producers also faced competition as imports to Britain rose from one fifth in the 1870s to one third by

² HCPP: *Report by the Inspector-General of Recruiting for the Regular Army 1870, 1871* [c.278], XIV.187, p.1.

³ HCPP: *Report by the Inspector-General of Recruiting for the Regular Army 1871, 1872* [c.495], XIV.813, p. 1.

⁴ D. Read, *England 1868 – 1914: the Age of Urban Democracy* (London, N.Y.: Longman, 1979), p.11.

the 1890s.⁵ More generally, Britain saw a slowing of its manufacturing and financial growth. Short-term but acute dips created further bursts of unemployment.⁶

These would seem to be ideal recruiting conditions. The reformers had hoped to increase the army's appeal in order to encourage enlistment through choice, not necessity. It would have been equally desirable, however, to capitalise on a newly-displaced labour force not yet plagued by the disenfranchisement of long-term impoverishment. In reality, the economic tensions of the late-Victorian period did not deliver to the army the assistance it might have hoped; the suitable conditions did not truly present themselves. The Victorians did not in fact experience a great depression so much as a slowing of economic growth and productivity.⁷ Moreover, Britain's annual surplus was reduced so that the severity of the downturn was exaggerated for contemporary economists in light of the particularly strong conditions prior to 1875.⁸ This had two key impacts on the army's recruiting strength: it reduced the traditional, and preferred, source of agricultural labourers for recruiting; and it caused a rise in real wages against which the army could not hope to compete.

Agricultural decline was pronounced from the mid-1870s onwards. Since the rural man was the army's preferred recruit this could have been an advantage. The 1891 Wantage Report, which acknowledged that agricultural labourers were no longer a sensible group to target, confirms that the War Office's preference for rural recruits was maintained throughout the 1870s and 1880s.⁹ Despite the population in the England and Wales growing from 26,000,000 in 1881 to 29,000,000 in 1891, the rural population was

⁵ Read, *England 1868-1914*, p.235.

⁶ A prime example is the crash of the ship building industry in the mid-1880s; rates of unemployment amongst workers reached 20%. See N. McCord, *British History 1815 – 1906* (Oxford: OUP, 1991), p.452.

⁷ M. Pugh, *State and Society: British Political and Social History 1870 – 1992* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), pp.5-4.

⁸ Read, *England 1868-1914*, p. 222.

⁹ TNA: WO 32/6294: 'Appendices to the Report of the Wantage Committee', p.32.

reduced from 8,300,000 in 1881 to 8,100,000 in 1891.¹⁰ Urbanisation drove the unemployed farm labourers into the towns and cities, not into the hands of the army. This presented a challenge for the War Office. The attempts made to counter the shifts of urbanisation in the form of localised regimental recruiting lessened the impact but also diverted energy and investment deeper into rural Britain at the expense of the increasingly fertile large towns.

The economic downturn also placed financial pressure on the army. Despite the deceleration of British manufacturing and industry in the late-nineteenth century, conditions for the working classes generally improved. This was particularly as a result of the increase in wages, in real terms, by one third between 1875 and 1900.¹¹ Foreign competition introduced cheap food for the consumer and thereby precipitated a fall in such costs of forty per cent.¹² Wages stagnated but did not fall during the depression thereby allowing the cost of living to reduce for the working classes.

In light of the rise in wages, and the War Office's refusal to improve the soldier's rate of pay, there remained a potent economic deterrent to service. The difference in civilian and military wages was considerable. The report of a Royal Commission on labour appointed in 1885 illustrates this disparity. It found that 56.3% of adult males engaged in manual labour earned between 15s and 25s per week. Almost one quarter earned between 25s and 30s. Only 2.5% fell into the 10s to 15s bracket and a mere 0.2% earned less than 10s per week.¹³ In comparison, the soldier's wage remained well below the civilian equivalent at just 7s per week. In spite of the War Office's efforts to raise awareness of the additional benefits the army offered with regards to education, food

¹⁰ Read, *England 1868 – 1914*, p.12, 233.

¹¹ Pugh, *State and Society*, p. 42.

¹² H. M. Lynd, *England in the 1880s: Towards a Social Basis for Freedom* (London: OUP, 1945), p.49.

¹³ Lynd, *England in the 1880s*, p. 52.

and accommodation, the figures did not reflect favourably on the army. The Wantage Committee highlighted the problem in 1891 by noting that the ‘pay within reach of able bodied, though unskilled, men is undoubtedly in excess of that offered by the state to the army recruit’.¹⁴

Where the War Office neglected to invest in the soldier’s wages it sought to press instead the other advantages military service offered. Food and accommodation and opportunities for economic and social advancement through education and promotion were provided *gratis* as part of the soldier’s reward. Conditions of life in the army were not renowned for their attractiveness however. Severe military discipline, a restricted diet, accusations of duplicity regarding stoppages for ‘essentials’, and basic barrack accommodation further weakened any prospect of low pay being considered part of an altogether more attractive package. Economically the army failed to attract recruits and continued to struggle to cultivate an appeal which could encourage respectable working-class men to enlist.

THE SOCIAL REALITIES AND WAR OFFICE REFORM

Despite its reticence to raise pay, the War Office was motivated by a desire for progression and professionalisation. It recognised that soldiering’s negative reputation had created a self-perpetuating cycle which saw respectable working-class men and their families reject the military career as socially beneath them. In response to this social barrier, a fundamental redefinition of the soldier was attempted with the object of legitimising the military career for the recruit-giving classes. If a poor estimation of the working-man’s economic priorities encouraged the War Office to sacrifice a good wage in favour of free food, accommodation and education, then a similar miscomprehension

¹⁴ TNA: WO 32/6294: Report of the Wantage Committee, p.13.

of the social complexion of the working classes further hindered the reforms' effectiveness.

As Pugh has noted, working-class men were more concerned with rates of pay and conditions of employment than social reform.¹⁵ The *laissez-faire* style of government favoured by the Victorians discouraged the public from looking to the state for social aid. In such a climate, individuals were unlikely to naturally consider the army a gateway to state-funded opportunities for social or economic advancement. Access to military schooling and the gentrification of the NCO class may have held some individual appeal, but the association of the army institution with social mobility was not a natural connection to make.

The challenge which faced the military reformers was rooted in the wider British class structure. The working class was not a homogenous social strata; hierarchies existed within the class itself and derision amongst different sub-groups was common.¹⁶ The army was not necessarily singled out for abuse. The nature of a man's employment was perceived by the Victorians to have a direct impact on his character. As Read notes, they, 'rightly believed that the permanent existence of distress and demoralisation encouraged disease and crime'.¹⁷ Social rejection of the soldier was grounded in a genuine mistrust of his background in the army, the conditions in which he lived and the individuals with whom he shared a barrack room. It was a problem the War Office recognised and sought to remedy by encouraging their own concept of the career soldier. However, the soldier occupied an established position within the working-class

¹⁵ Pugh, *State and Society*, p.46.

¹⁶ For example, permanent labourers looked down upon casual labourers and unskilled labourers disdained those employed in dirtier trades than their own. Even members of the lowest orders identified their place, and that of others, in the pecking order. English coasters despised Irish coasters for instance. See Read, *England 1868 – 1914*, p.34.

¹⁷ Read, *England 1868 – 1914*, p.35.

hierarchy. He needed to climb a ladder within that society as a whole and leapfrog the other trades and professions above him to rise in status and alter his reputation.

The extent to which the War Office fully comprehended the complexities of the working-class social structure, and the soldier's place within it, is unclear. Certainly, the ability of its schemes to encourage a tangible repositioning of the army were not altogether appropriate. The War Office did, at times, demonstrate a lack of understanding of working-class desires and concerns. For instance, enhancements made to the conditions of service enjoyed by NCOs, by way of leisure and mess facilities more akin to those enjoyed by the officer corps, were intended to present the rank-and-file with the opportunity to aspire to a lower-middle-class lifestyle. Social mobility, though important, did not necessarily require the transcending of one's social class however. Ascending within the working-class was a more common aim; many people were content to preserve and strengthen their own social position.¹⁸ The potency of the War Office's efforts is therefore questionable.

THE SOLDIER, SOCIETY AND CULTURE

As David French has highlighted, Cardwell did not invent the British regimental system.¹⁹ Rather, the 1868-74 and 1880-2 reforms built upon the existing system and, inspired by the Prussian and French models, encouraged civil-military affiliation through localisation. The presence of the army in local towns and cities was enhanced as a result. Military marches, exhibitions and bands were used to good effect in establishing an identifiable local presence.²⁰ Both the military memoirs and the mainstream press attest to the mutual pleasure both soldiers and civilians took from

¹⁸ Read, *England 1868 – 1914*, p.24.

¹⁹ French, *Military Identities*, p. 1.

²⁰ Streets, *Martial Races*, p.189.

such displays. According to one memoir, the soldiers, ‘swelled their chests’ as the regiment was ‘regarded with approval’.²¹

In addition to the localisation schemes, already well established in current scholarship, this thesis has highlighted the breadth and depth of the reform movement. Breaking from the controversial recruiting practices of old, the army attempted to re-enter the labour market as a recognisable and authentic player. The War Office sought to draw on a positive and professional presence, to be achieved through a modernised recruiting strategy, in the hope of removing the stigma of enlistment. It anticipated that military service would come to be viewed as an acceptable contract of employment between the state and the individual. The strategies it employed were not isolated nor spontaneous. Though defined by the schemes of Cardwell and Childers, the War Office maintained a continuous dialogue which evolved and progressed logically and perceptibly leading up to and beyond the latter reforms.

Due largely to the social and economic limitations already highlighted, the War Office did not succeed in precipitating a direct top-down popularisation of military service. The British Government was, however, in part responsible for encouraging a public reengagement with the ordinary soldier. Contemporary newspaper records reveal a broad consensus over the necessity of reform, although that did not extend to the methods by which reform was to be achieved. Public engagement with that debate was partially responsible for the British reengagement with the soldier as perceptions of the army broadened to consider servicemen specifically. Public discussion of the military prior to the mid-1880s rarely addressed the rank-and-file as individuals or fellow ‘Englishmen’. The War Office’s movement to rehabilitate and promote the soldier through its reforms encouraged the public to view the army institution from a new

²¹ Davis, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad*, p.13.

perspective, one characterised by the abilities and experiences of the men themselves, beyond the insight afforded by the publication of statistical information.

The presence of the soldier in print highlights the considerable fascination military life held for the Victorians. It was an appeal which grew to its peak by the mid-1890s. Newspapers and periodicals adjusted the tone of their content to reflect the public appetite for a military yarn. Profiles of soldiers, mini-biographies and serialised recollections of service appeared semi-frequently in local and London newspapers alike. The increase in publication of military memoirs during the period highlights further a public fascination with the military experience.²²

It was not entirely the transition the reformers had envisioned; short service in particular undermined the image of the soldier rather than enhanced it. However, public anxieties over immature soldiers in the ranks in the late-1870s and the 1880s helped to foster an awareness of the private soldier which further shifted him from the periphery to the centre of military affairs. The War Office reforms did also positively bolster the soldier's transition. They assisted in countering criticism of the rank-and-file as potentially outdated and helped to urge the public to reconsider their estimation of the soldier. But it was one element in a process which by the 1890s was still in the early stages.

Public sympathy for the soldier spiked demonstrably in the mainstream press during periods when the army was engaged in a high-profile conflict. As Chapter 4 has highlighted, anxieties caused by the Franco-Prussian War encouraged the reform debate.

²² Davies, *Tommy Atkins at Home and Abroad*, p.1.

Whereas the army's ability to meet continental military opposition incited concern over its strength on paper, campaigns such as the Ashanti War in 1873 and the wars against the Mahdi in Egypt and the Sudan in the early to mid-1880s encouraged ideas of the soldier in instances of heroism and sacrifice. By the early 1890s such imagery formed a potent part of the popular cultural militarism and imperialism of the period.

Socially, conflict would appear to have had less of an impact on the status of the soldier in the long term. Cartoons such as *Punch's* Tenniel illustration 'Short Service and Quick Returns' and *Judy's* 'Tommy Atkins to the Front' convey clear sentiments of pride and respect regarding soldiers returning from war or continuing their defence of the Empire and British interests abroad.²³ The excitement and glory of his imperial deeds did not remain with the soldier however. The social realities of the military in Britain, highlighted particularly by the tensions in garrison towns, drew a stark contrast between the soldier abroad and the soldier at home.

Fears over the detrimental impact the presence of soldiers could have on civilian life in Britain were epitomised by the controversies surrounding the Contagious Diseases Act. Introduced in 1863, the act imposed health checks on prostitutes in garrison towns in an attempt to control the spread of venereal disease. Amended in 1883 and repealed in 1886, the act proved highly controversial. It was seen by some as the safeguarding of public health. Others, however, interpreted the act as allowing the state sanctioning of prostitution and even the patronising of vice.²⁴ It was in the home-service setting that the War Office faced the prime challenge of popularising the soldier.

²³ Tenniel, 'Short Service and Quick Returns', *Punch* (21 October 1882); Anon, 'Tommy Atkins to the Front', *Judy* (25 March 1882).

²⁴ K. Chesney, *The Victorian Underworld* (London: Temple Smith, 1970), pp.360-4.

The rehabilitation of the soldier's image affected his cultural presence in Britain more than his social status. The importance of the Empire for trade and employment in Britain was not lost on the working classes. The working-class man was reliant on the import and export of goods and resources for his livelihood. As Chamberlain has noted, 'He was tied to the trade he knew and the place he knew'.²⁵ The glory and excitement of imperial warfare offered a cultural and, to an extent, social appeal. The maintenance of the Empire not only aided economic prosperity but also provided the public with a source of pride and fascination. Public enthusiasm for the military theme coincided with the Great Depression and the growth in public anxiety over the stability of the economy and the nation.²⁶ All this did not translate into enthusiasm for the soldier in Britain however, or for service in the Army. The Empire incited a fascination and excitement around the military but it did not encourage greater civil-military social relations. The army rose in cultural value but the British public simultaneously maintained a strong and stubborn sense of its low social position.

Crucially however, as the soldier's public identity became more familiar, a concept of the army based around its personnel, rather than an enigmatic institution on the periphery of national consciousness, became more prominent. The expansion of the mainstream press alongside illustrated and comic periodicals assisted in this development by providing an increasingly literate public access to the ongoing debate surrounding the soldier. The cartoons explored in chapters 4 and 5 represent a further potent medium by which the idea of the soldier was reiterated and exported to the

²⁵ M. E. Chamberlain, 'Imperialism and Social Reform', in *British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by C. C. Eldridge (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), pp.160-1.

²⁶ D. Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture: Perceptions and Introspections in an Age of Change* (London: John Murray 1977), p.135,

general public. Cartoonists including the renowned illustrators John Tenniel, John Proctor and Jack Butler Yeats provided the public with a variety of visual interpretations of the military man. They had the potential to strongly influence the ideas individuals held of Tommy Atkins. Conversely, military-themed art prior to the Boer War has traditionally been understood to have formed part of the ‘myth of British anti-militarism’ by resisting the growth of jingoistic culture during the period.²⁷ However, as Hichberger has since argued, art played a valuable role in reintroducing the soldier to society. Lady Butler in particular formed part of an ‘anti-aristocracy discourse which elevated the ranks into national heroes’.²⁸

Representations of the soldier were perhaps most deep-rooted and prominent in imperialistic and militaristic culture. In particular, the adult working classes engaged with Tommy Atkins on the stage and in the music halls.²⁹ The comedies, melodramas and ballads which were performed constitute a particularly potent source of exposure for the soldier. In stark juxtaposition to the War Office’s pragmatic and sanitised recruiting strategy, the soldier of the stage embodied the glories of war and the romance of imperial service. The soldier and the sailor were common and valuable tropes by which the attributes of British imperial might could be demonstrated and celebrated. As Summerfield has noted, ‘On the whole the national superiority was seen to derive from the good qualities of the redcoats and the bluejackets themselves, rather than anything as abstract as “Albion”’.³⁰ Consumed alongside the less overtly imperialistic representations of the soldier in the press and the increased presence of the soldier in childhood toys and adventure literature, the Tommy Atkins rapidly became the embodiment of imperial might and British strength abroad.

²⁷ Hichberger, *Images of the Army*, p.1.

²⁸ Hichberger, *Images of the Army*, p.77.

²⁹ Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.45.

³⁰ Summerfield, ‘Patriotism and Empire’, p.31.

Imagery depicting the military was increasingly common by the late-nineteenth century. Developments in Victorian popular culture facilitated a pervasive presence which brought the soldier into the home and into British life. Localisation and the associated presence of marching bands and displays encouraged such connections from an official perspective, however, a great deal of integration of the military into civilian life took place beyond the auspices of the War Office. Military themed postcards and posters, pamphlets and cheap books were increasingly accessible to the general public thanks to universal education, increased literacy and developments in paper production and printing technologies.³¹

The army in print developed alongside other examples in which the military theme permeated civilian society. Board games and toy soldiers for instance represent a further method by which the soldier gained a wide popular appeal, in this instance primarily for children. Such ephemera brought the army into the home with both visual depictions of soldiers and information on regiments, uniforms and armaments.³² Considered alongside his presence in the illustrated press, the soldier became a recognisable feature in British visual culture. Culturally, the identity of the soldier gathered a following of its own which, though stemming in part from the War Office reforms, moved away from that original impetus.

³¹ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.22.

³² MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.28.

THE SOLDIER IN PRINT

John MacKenzie identifies ‘new popular imperialism’ as late-Victorian morality - characterised by self-help, aggressive individualism and self-improvement - suffused with elements of patriotism, racism and militarism.³³ On the stage, the soldier provided a potent embodiment of many of those qualities. Further to the adult-oriented entertainment of the music halls, popular imperialism found a vehicle in printed cultural material, notably adventure fiction and juvenile adventure literature, for which 1880 – 1914 constituted a ‘golden age’.³⁴

As with the jingoistic elements of Music Hall, the military was a popular trope in such imperialist adventure literature. It enabled patriotic and imperial ideology to target specific audiences, in this case not so much the working classes but more specifically children. Stories of adventures in the Empire, intended for consumption by young and adolescent boys, were used to compensate, in part, for a growing sense of national insecurity. The late-Victorians experienced a crisis of confidence over the ability of the male youth to protect the Empire.³⁵ Popular authors such as G. A. Henty built upon the juvenile literature of the like of R. M. Ballantyne to augment their upliftingly moral but violent content with explicit military themes and characterisation. ‘Henty’s Empire’, MacKenzie has noted, ‘was the Empire of the soldier rather than the administrator or the missionary.’³⁶ Here, the concept of military service and an abstract notion of the soldier formed a cultural presence for Tommy Atkins which by the 1890s was feeding the public fascination with military life. It was however also steeped in ideology and

³³ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.199.

³⁴ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p. 200.

³⁵ Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Britain*, p.193.

³⁶ MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, p.210.

symbolism; as many of the memoirs attest, this cultural incarnation of the soldier was still far removed from the realities, social and economic, of the rank-and-file.

Where this imperialistic interpretation did aid the soldier was in further engaging the British public with the individual in the army. The War Office reforms encouraged a re-examination of the British soldier. Combined with the influences of militarism, the soldier emerged from the shadow of the army and re-entered public consciousness. The rediscovered humanity of the soldier made 'Tommy Atkins' more relatable. As a result, the conditions and experiences which defined military service also gained new relevance and attracted interest and amusement. Attitudes to military service did not change greatly and socially the presence of soldiers continued to cause concern. However, the army began to be viewed in terms beyond functionality and cost to the taxpayer.

Literary works featuring the soldier reflected a similar pattern, with the military man enjoying a limited but increasing presence in non-adventure genres. The soldier continued to be presented as outside of normal social circles and, in the case of Hardy and Kipling in particular, as colourful but potentially unsavoury in character. Both the press and popular authors displayed increasing reluctance to vilify Tommy Atkins. Kipling's output in particular was intended in part as a defence of the soldier, not that his lurid characterisations met with complete approval among the soldiers themselves. His work generally presents Tommy Atkins as an imperial servant however. In contrast, the poetry of A. E. Housman provided an excellent summation of the would-be soldier in his home setting, highlighting the lottery of which young men of the village might eventually enlist. *A Shropshire Lad* delivered a combination of praise for the soldier and

criticism of society and the army over the sacrifices awaiting the unsuspecting young recruit. Crucially, *ASL* and Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* placed the military man into a civilian setting. The outcome of military and civilian interaction was not positive in Hardy's case but the presence of Troy in the English countryside and the identification of the soldier as a son of Shropshire in *ASL* illustrate the movement towards recognising the army as an integral part of British domestic culture.

The British press became an increasingly potent forum in print for supporters of the soldier to voice their opposition to prejudice against him. The public's awareness, supported by greater publicity regarding the hardships suffered by troops in Africa and India and the growth in militarism and imperialism, made public discrimination against men in uniform increasingly unacceptable. Resistance to anti-military attitudes was heightened by the army's resolve to respond to displays of discrimination by landlords through the boycotting of offending establishments. Increasingly, the press asked of its readership what the civilian owed the soldier for his service. This was a significant transformation from the attitudes of the 1870s which would sooner ask what the civilian could expect from the army in return for his taxes.

THE MILITARY PERSPECTIVE

Exploring the political and public perspectives on the army reveals a great deal about the contemporaneous attitudes and expectations which helped to define the concept of the late-Victorian soldier. However, they are perceptions held by third parties on a distinct yet heterogeneous group of men. In the case of the civilian relationship with the soldier, the military memoirs and the press highlight how limited public knowledge of the realities of life in the army could be. The information proffered tended to be basic

and yet enthusiastically received. The majority of memoirs cite civilian ignorance of the realities of military life as an impetus to publish and a major aspect of Kipling's appeal was in providing colour to the anonymous Tommy. Individuals in the War Office, and the architects of the reforms in particular, may have had some acquaintance with the rank-and-file but for the most part relied on evidence supplied by official statistics and witnesses at Royal Commissions. They worked towards the ideal of the soldier they wished to create, not with the realities of the men they already had. And none had personal experience of life in the ranks. In the midst of a sustained debate over their status and quality, the rank-and-file formed and expressed their own opinions which both confirmed and denied the ideas of the outside world.

The attitudes soldiers expressed in relation to the Cardwell-Childers Reforms were not, as a rule, at odds with the War Office stance or the general public's attitude. The *Broad Arrow* newspaper reflected a similar outlook to that which had been expressed in the civilian press. The editors, columnists and letters from servicemen reveal an acceptance that reform was a necessity. Generally, the criticism inherent in the reforms was not taken as a slight but rather was received as constructive or overlooked as relating to other less savoury comrades. The frequency and content of the issues, and the informed stance of the discussion they contained, suggest a considerable level of engagement with the public discussion of the reforms within the military. Whilst not opposing the War Office, there is an element of defiance and a willingness to criticise aspects, both of the reforms, and also civilian treatment of the army.

It was a stance more broadly reflected in both soldier letters to civilian newspapers and in the military memoirs. The reforms were criticised for their negative impact on certain

aspects of the army but on the whole, they were not denounced nor opposed. The memoirs in particular proffer a perspective on what serving men thought of 'the soldier'. They did not entirely contradict the estimation held by the public at large. The authors were willing to admit that the ranks of the army were composed of men with a variety of backgrounds, education and prospects. Not all were of the highest calibre. Short service in particular introduced a new type of soldier, of a higher class perhaps, but immature and lacking in commitment. At the other end of the scale, the old soldier was rough in nature and institutionalised.

Equally however, the memoirs were intended to offer an explanation for their kind and were keen to highlight the positives, such as the young soldier's reduced tendency to vice and the old soldier's steadfastness. Division between the two could often be familial, with paternal concern for the younger soldiers and quiet respect for the older men. The identity of the soldier, not least the uniform and sense of duty, bound the men together to a great extent. It provided purpose to the confinements of barrack life.

The military memoirs and the *Broad Arrow* may have been willing to admit to the failings of the army as a collective, but both also illustrate a preparedness to counter public criticism as well. Ignorance was the most common accusation levied against the civilian. Issues such as drink, acknowledged to be a vice of the soldier, were admitted, but a lack of understanding of the causes of alcohol consumption and the punishment of intoxication under military law was claimed in several memoirs. Military discipline generally was identified as an area in which civilians lacked comprehension, and the perception that crime was prevalent in the army was challenged in this basis. The

military men were keen to correct misapprehensions about their lifestyle, particularly in light of the increased public interest in the army of the 1890s.

CONCLUSION

The paradox of the late-Victorian soldier, the imperial hero and domestic undesirable, is accurate. The soldier underwent a considerable transition between 1868 and 1899 which redefined military life into a source of fascination for the British public. It was primarily in a cultural sense that the soldier acquired this appeal. His role in the British Empire fed most potently into imperial culture, however, more broadly, the soldier attracted interest in terms of his general existence and masculine qualities. Socially, the army's reputation was less transformed. The Cardwell-Childers Reforms raised awareness of the soldier but did not succeed in revising fully the public perception of military service. However, the social and cultural presence of the late-Victorian soldier constitutes a significant development in the relationship between the British and their military. It would take the civilian influx of the South African War and the Great War to fully expose Tommy Atkins to the world.

FURTHER RESEARCH

This thesis presents a profile of the late-Victorian soldier by focussing on the political, social and cultural influences behind his development. Few studies have conducted a dedicated examination of the British rank-and-file. The majority of scholarship exploring that group have done so within a wider scope, such as the army as an institution, or in the course of deconstructing popular imperialist and militaristic culture. As such, the complexities and contradictions of the soldier have never before been afforded undivided attention. With the profile of the soldier developed within this

thesis, it would be expedient to return to those fields in which he is a feature. This would be particularly interesting in the context of imperialism and popular culture in which the redcoat is a frequently exploited symbol. The soldier's social and wider cultural background may reveal a great deal more about the depth of militaristic and imperialistic sentiments. Greater context may be added to the attitudes of civilians who subscribed to the entertainment of popular culture but whose stance regarding the realities of imperial service were rather more reticent.

There is also a great deal more to research around the soldier, which limitations in scope and sources have precluded from this study. The remit was restricted to an examination of the military man in the context of home service and his interaction with British civilians. The experiences and impact of service overseas were not considered. They are, however, important facets of life in the imperial army. There is a considerable volume of primary source material available, not least in the form of campaign diaries which, tending to begin with embarkation, have been largely overlooked in the present study. Interactions between the British soldier and civilians, especially in India, would be particularly interesting in compiling a complete picture of Tommy Atkins and his interaction with the British Empire.

The experiences of the soldier in wartime is a further field into which this research has not yet extended. The South African War and the First World War saw the barriers between civilian and military worlds lowered remarkably through the mass influx of civilians to the Colours, providing a logical end for the present study. However, the popularisation of the soldier continued well into the twentieth century. An extension of this research to encompass the Edwardian and inter-war periods as well as the two

world wars would be required to achieve a complete of the British soldier. For the soldier in wartime in particular, diaries would once again be valuable, as would the small collection of military periodicals such as, the *Ladyship Bombshell* (1899) the *Mafeking Mail* (1899-1900) from the South African War, which were produced by the troops.

There are several aspects of domestic service which could also benefit from further study. The civilian and military press require extensive further research, with more specific studies tracing particular threads or events rather than an overview of attitudes and coverage. The challenges in dealing with the volume of newspaper material currently available encouraged a broad approach for this thesis. The ever-increasing accuracy of search tools for digitised collections will enable more specific studies to be conducted.

Post-service employment and the care of veterans is an example of the soldier in a domestic setting with particular potential. A political pressure point throughout the late-nineteenth century, life after service had a marked effect on the appeal of the military career. The War Office expended considerable efforts and resources in attempting to arrange employment for veterans and risked undermining their legitimisation of the military career if they failed. The philanthropic care for ex-serviceman also warrants further study. Soldiers' Institutes and post-service employment charities emerged during this period as concern for the rank-and-file increased. The desire to care for ex-soldiers increased sharply in the 1890s as veterans of the Crimea and Indian Mutiny reached old age. Furthermore, the general absence of social or philanthropic concern for veterans, save for a few charitable examples, may

reveal even more about the British civilian's relationship with the army and attitudes to the duties and sacrifices of the Empire and its servants.

APPENDIX

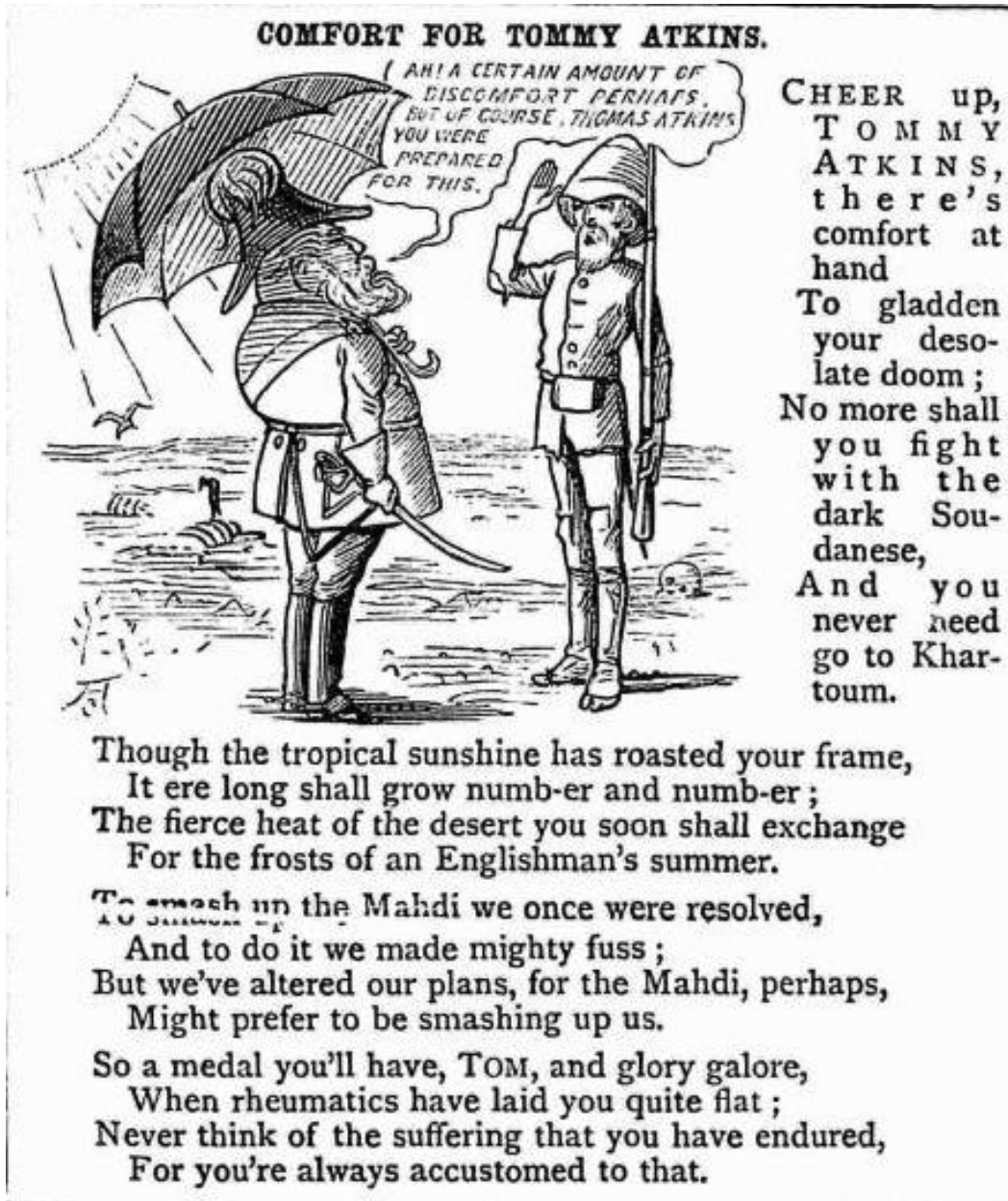
THE MILITARY CARTOONS

FIGURE 1: J. Proctor, 'The Post Office Undertakes the Enlistment of Recruits',
Moonshine, London (December 1883).



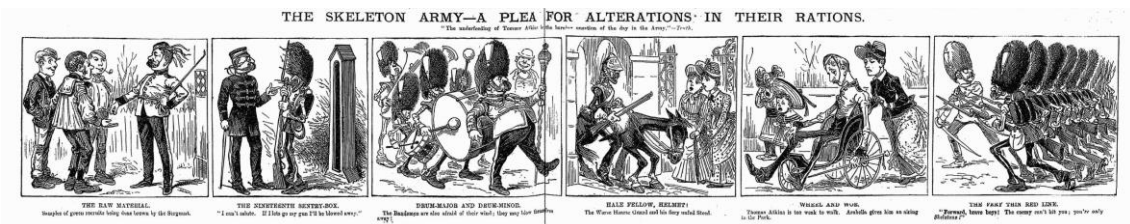
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FIGURE 2: Unknown, 'Comfort for Tommy Atkins', *Judy*, London (20 May 1885).



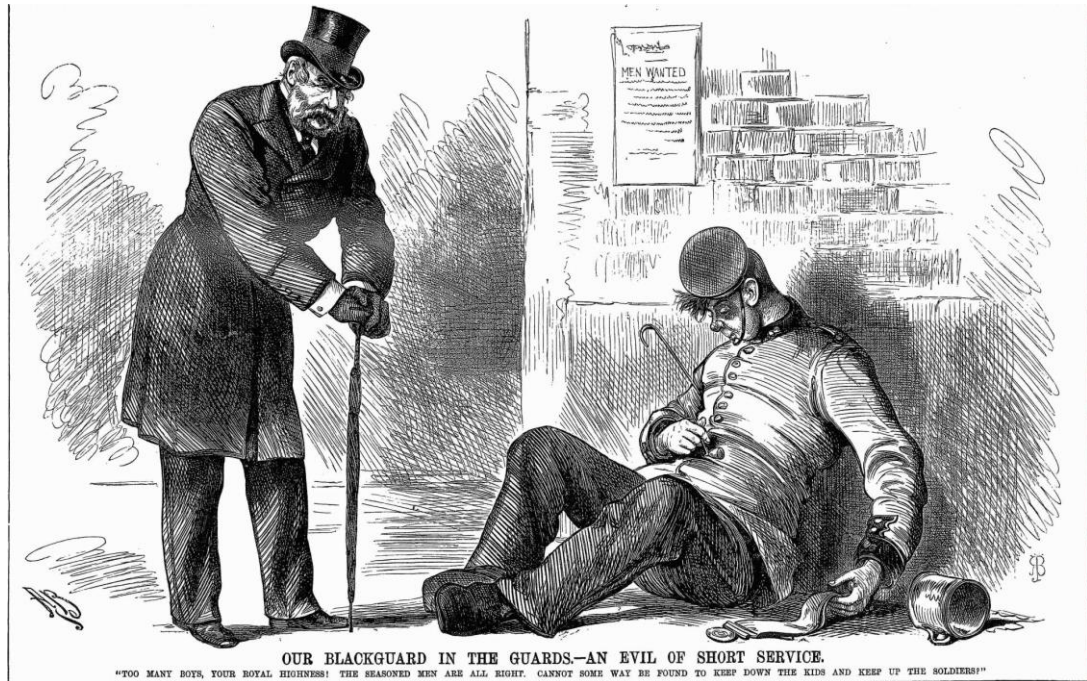
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FIGURE 3: Anon., 'The Skeleton Army – A Plea for Alterations in their Rations' *Funny Folks*, London (9 March 1889).



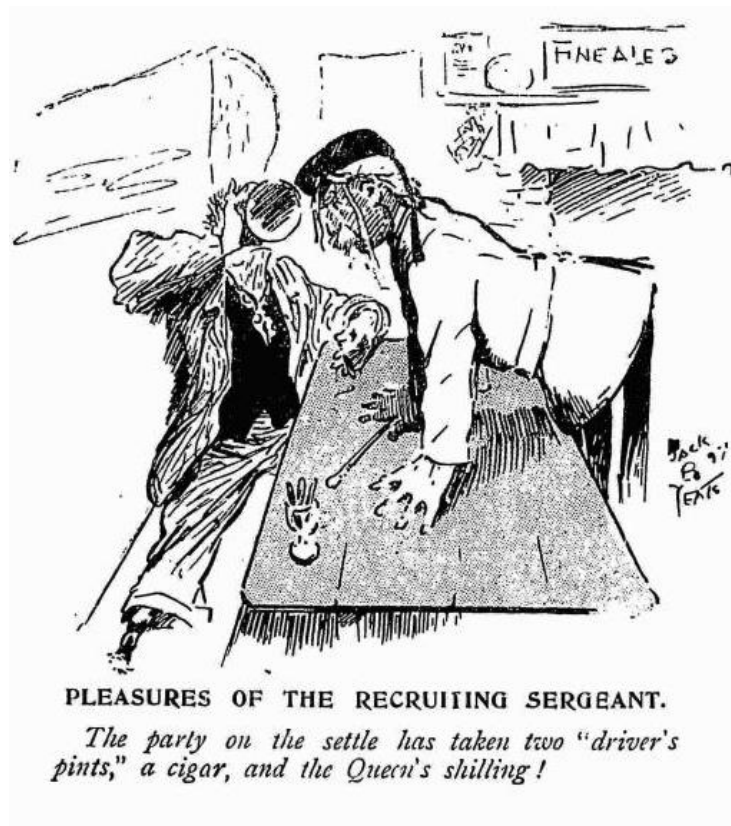
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FIGURE 4: Unknown, 'Our Blackguard in the Guards – An Evil of Short Service' in *Moonshine* (27 September 1890), p. 148.



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FIGURE 5: J. B. Yeats, 'Pleasures of the Recruiting Sergeant', *Judy* (24 March 1897), p. 143.



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FIGURE 6: Unknown, 'Army and Navy Intelligence',
Punch, London (6 August 1870), p.61.



FIGURE 7: W. H. Boucher, 'The Recruiting Difficulty',
 Judy, London (14 April, 1875).



Sergeant (to Schoolmaster). IF YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF SOME OF THESE LADS FOR THE QUEEN'S SERVICE 'T'WILL BE WORTH THEM AND THE COUNTRY. 'YODDER FELLOWS ARE NO GOOD TO US.—See Mr. Macdonald's Speech at United Service Institution.

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FIGURE 8: W. Reynolds, 'Why Do not Working Men Enlist',
 Funny Folks, London (30 October 1880), p.347.

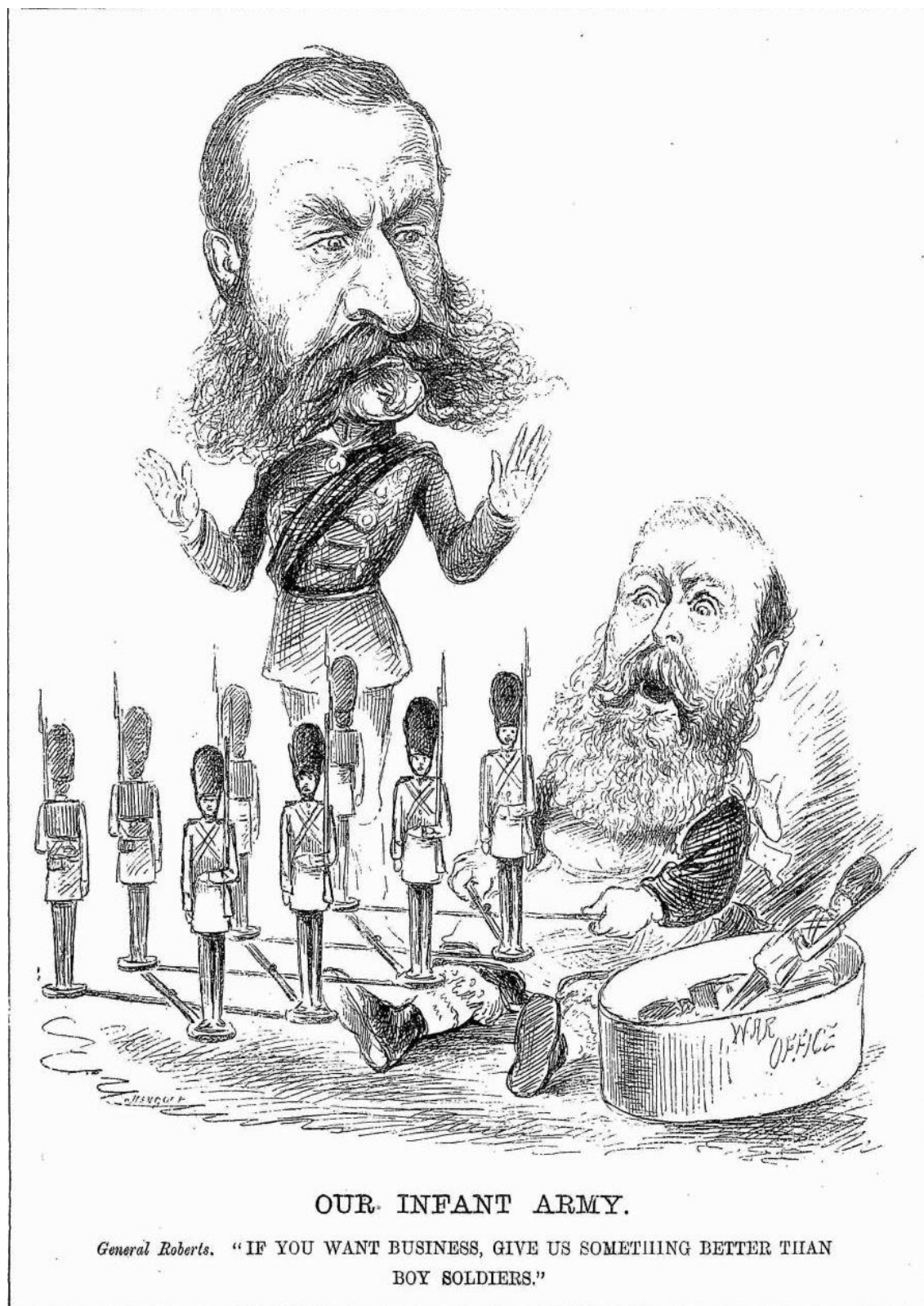


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FIGURE 9: W. Reynolds, 'Reforms in Regimentals',
Funny Folks, London (13 November 1880), p.363.



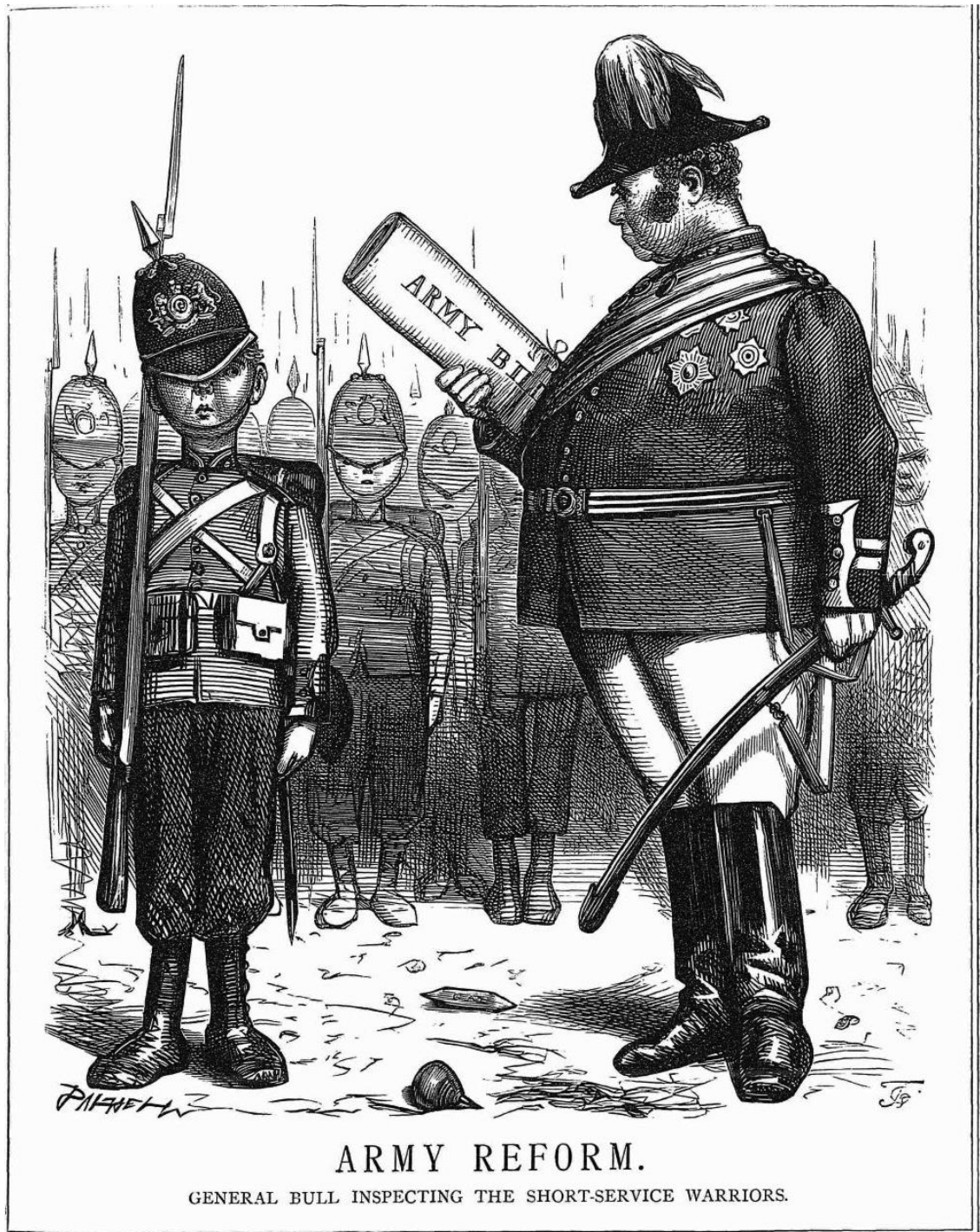
FIGURE 10: Unknown, 'Our Infant Army',
Moonshine, London (26 February, 1881), p.97.



OUR INFANT ARMY.

General Roberts. "IF YOU WANT BUSINESS, GIVE US SOMETHING BETTER THAN
BOY SOLDIERS."

FIGURE 11: J. G. Thomson, 'Army Reform',
Fun, London (16 March 1881), p.106.



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FIGURE 12: Unknown, 'Military Sketch No.1. Short Service',
Moonshine, London (2 April 1881), p.160.



Military Sketch, No. 1.—Short Service.

Recruit (ordered abroad). "DON'T CRY, MARY. GET KILLED!—NO FEAR. AFORE WE LAND OUR TIME WILL HAVE EXPIRED!"

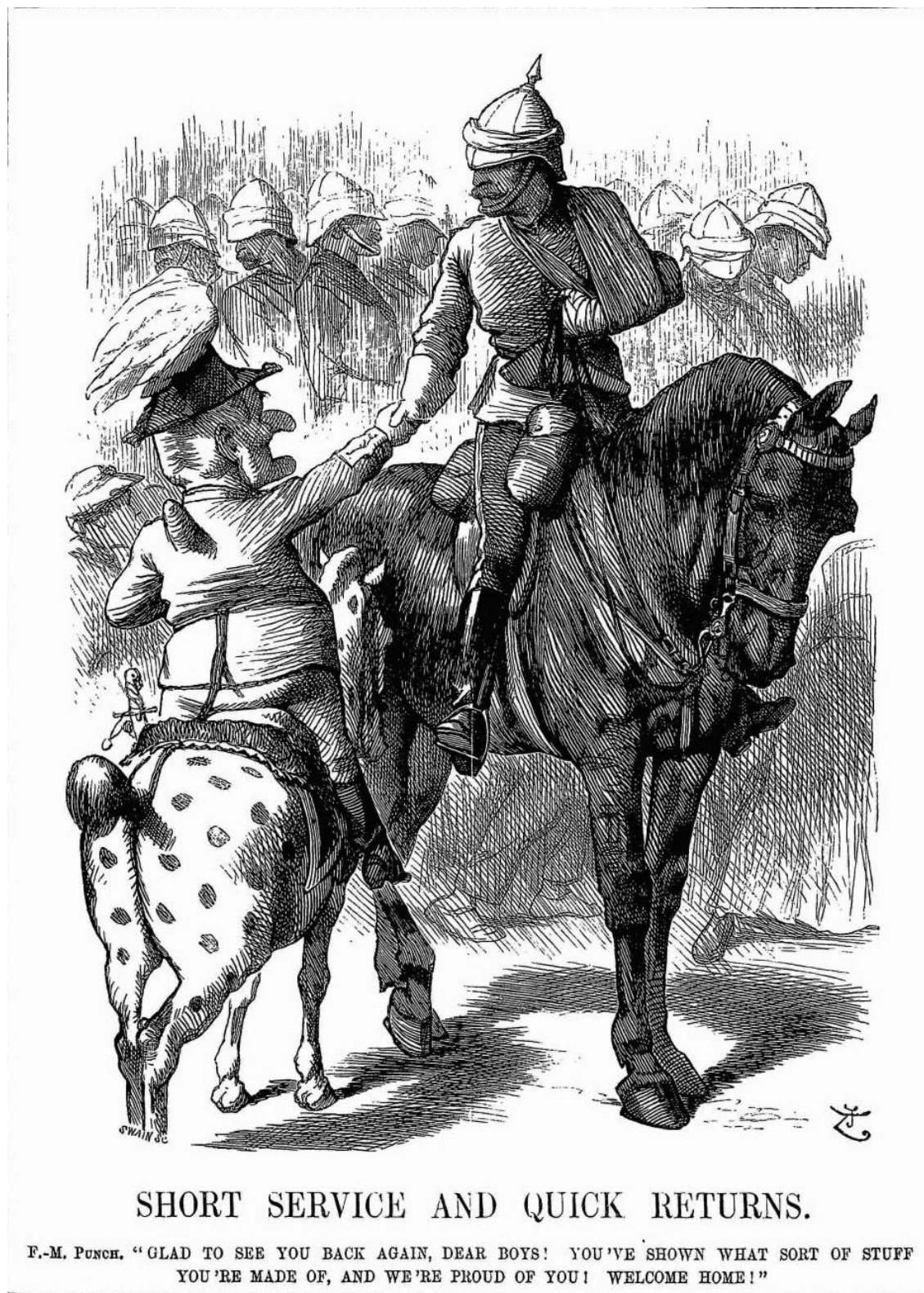
FIGURE 13: Unknown, 'Military Sketch No.2. A Poser for Childers',
Moonshine, London (2 April 1881), p.165.



Military Sketch, No. 2.—A Poser for Childers.

Stranger (to officer in charge). "I FORBID YOU TO MARCH OFF THAT
ARMY. I AM THE SCHOOL BOARD INSPECTOR!"

FIGURE 14: J. Tenniel, 'Short Service and Quick Returns',
Punch, London (21 October 1882), p.186.

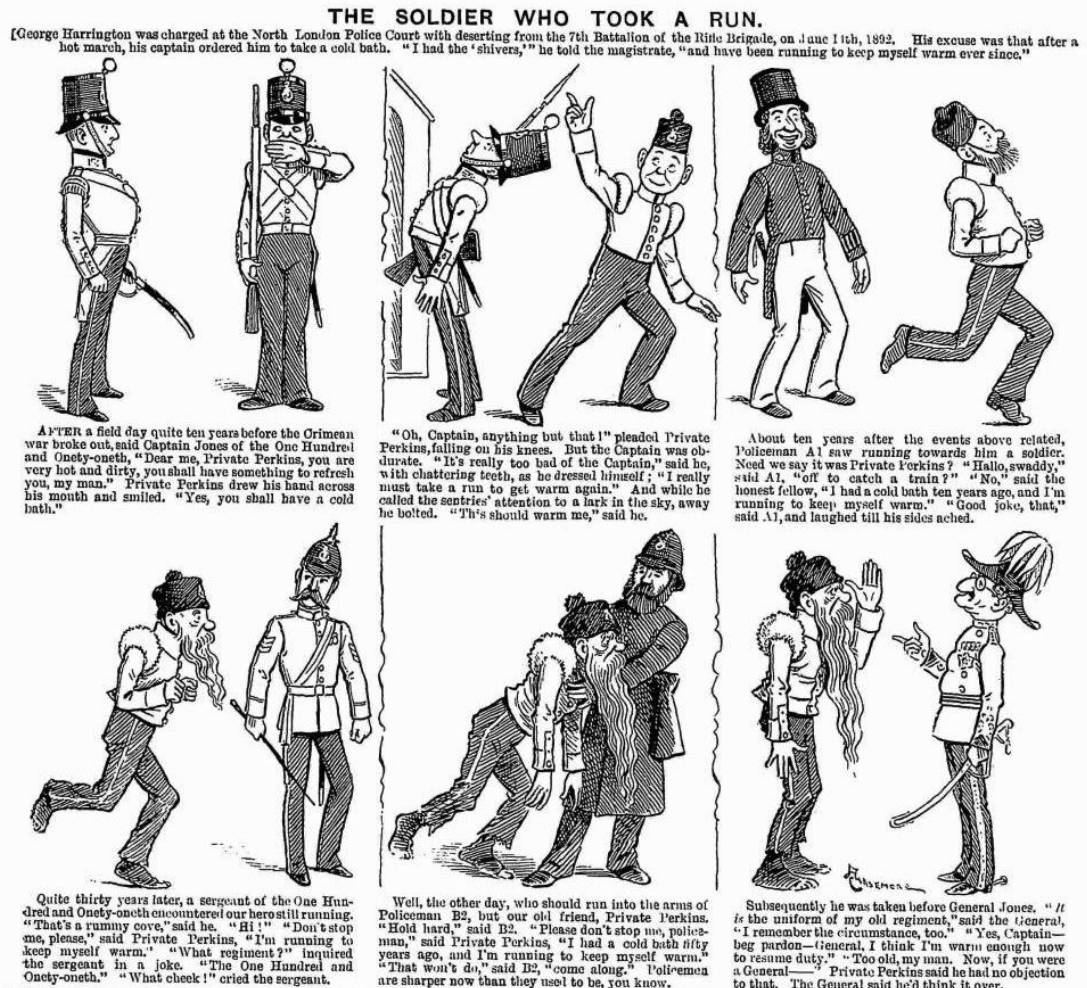


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FIGURE 15: Anon., 'Tommy Atkins to the Front',
Judy, London (25 March 1885), p.142.



FIGURE 16: A. Chasemore, 'The Soldier Who Took a Run',
Judy, London (6 December 1893), p.276.



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FIGURE 17: F. R., 'England's Defenders – The Army and the Navy' (Illustration), *Chatterbox*, London (11 October 1890), p.377.



England's Defenders.—The Army and Navy.

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FIGURE 18: B. M., 'England's Defenders – The Army and the Navy (Poem),
Chatterbox, London (11 October 1890), p.377.

DEAR England! island of the sea,
So dim, so misty, and so small!
How many crowding folk there be
Who never leave her shores at all,
But live and love, and toil and die
Beneath her grey and cloudy sky!

When war afflicts the nations round
With all its penalties and pains,
She seldom hears the trumpet sound,
But girdled by the sea remains
Secure, without a foe to fear,
For never foe dare venture near!

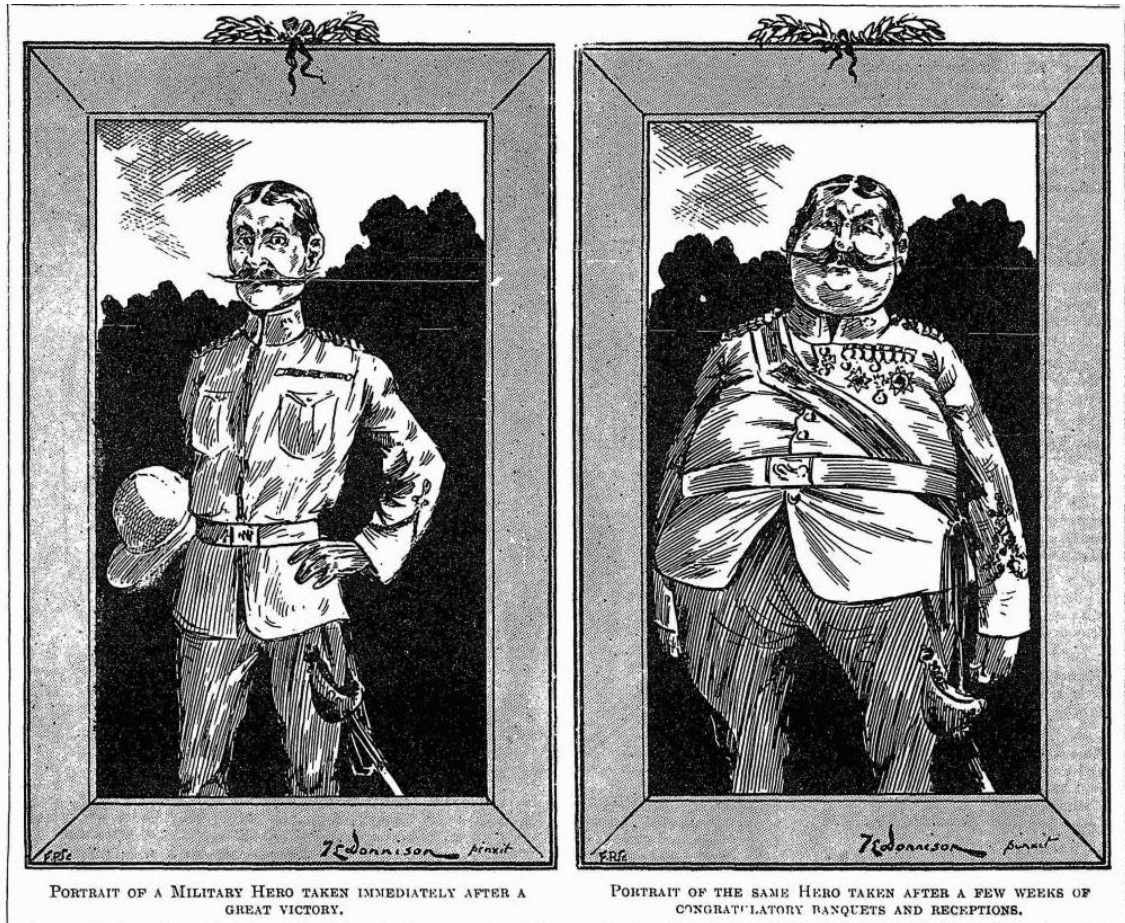
For why? her navy sweeps the sea,
Admired and feared by one and all
(Though envious nations hope to see
Her glory end in sad downfall);
And England's soldiers, who so bold?
Could all their glorious deeds be told,

The bare recital well might move
To kindred deeds the coldest heart;
Might cause the meanest soul to love,
And choose to play a noble part,
Might teach all men, and women too,
When duty calls 'The task to do.'

The laughing lads, who in their play
Delight to act a warrior's part,
Who knows but in some future day
They too, with brave and manly heart,
Will take their stand when foes are nigh,
To do their duty, or to die!

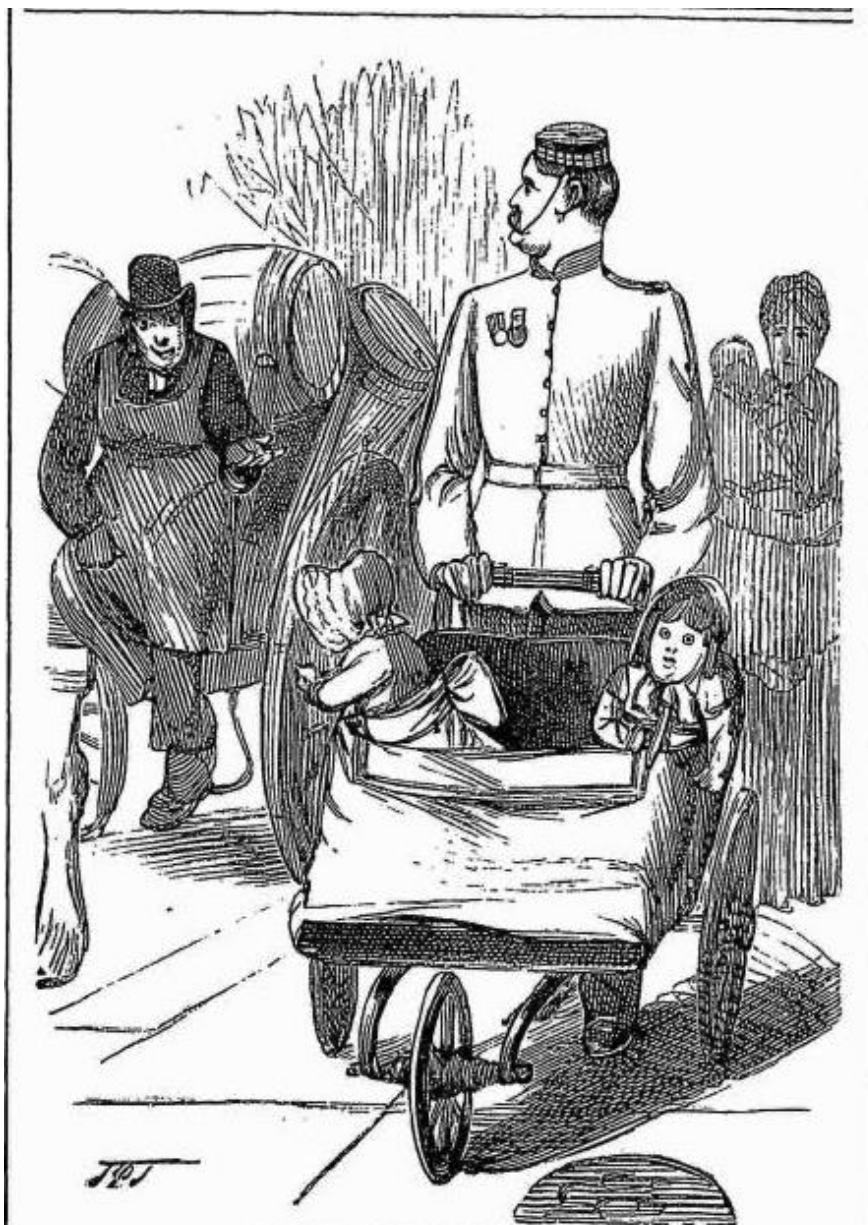
Brought up in happy English homes,
Young subjects of our Gracious Queen,
May never coward deed be theirs,
Nor blush of guilt and shame be seen
On those young faces now so fair,
So innocent, so free from care! B. M.

FIGURE 19: T. E. Donnison, 'Portrait of a Military Hero Taken Immediately After a Great Victory', *Fun*, London (22 November 1888), p.164.



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FIGURE 20: Unknown, 'Army Retrenchment',
Moonshine, London (7 July 1888), p.11.



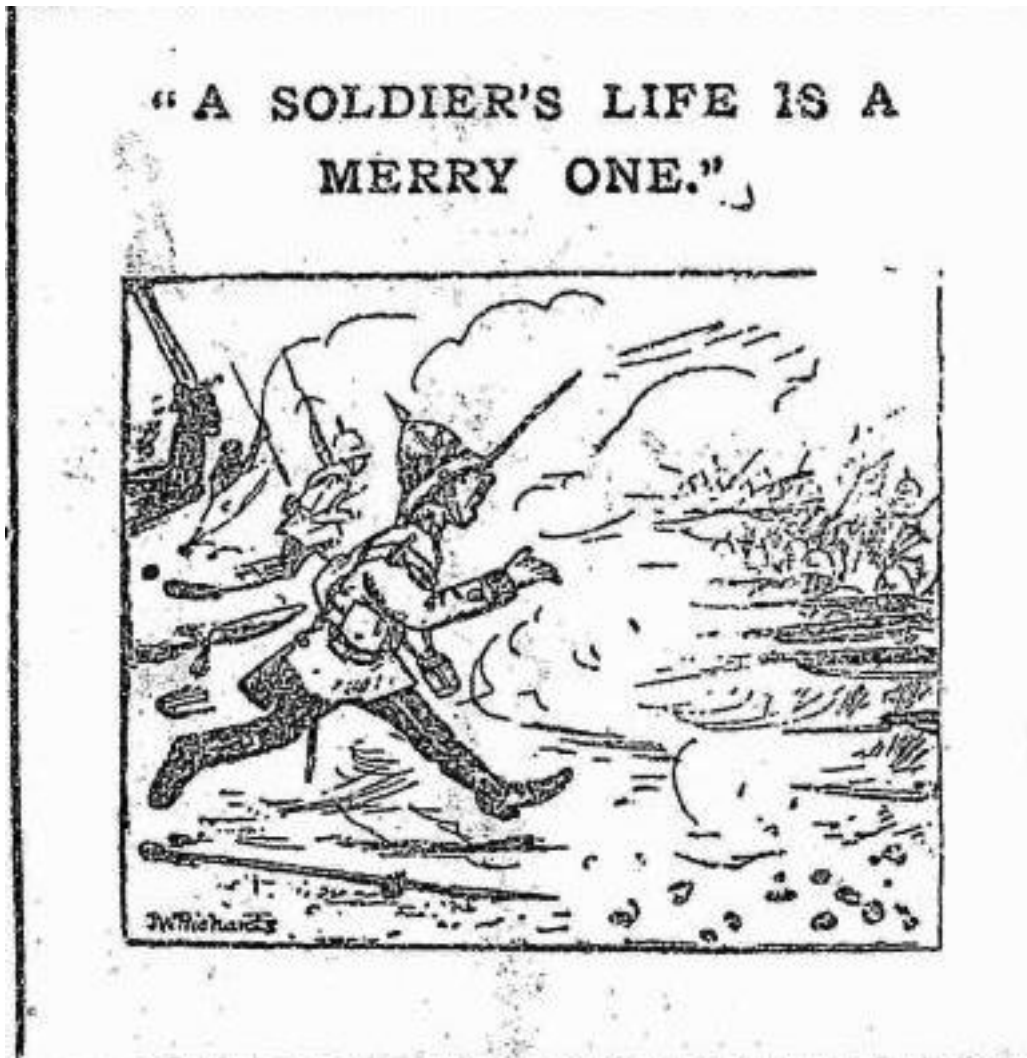
ARMY RETRENCHMENT.

Scene — Garrison Town on Medway.

[*Married Sapper, taking family out for an airing on the first fine day, is discovered wheeling a perambulator with the two latest olive branches; the Mother is bringing up the rear dragging along a little girl.*]

Brewer's Man (a disciple of Lord Grandolph, with a full load of barrels of beer, is passing; pulls up, and addressing the tired Sapper, says, with indignant tone as he views the family). "I SAY, SAPPER, IS THAT WHAT I PAY YOU FOR?"

FIGURE 21: J. W. Richards, 'A Soldier's Life is a Merry One',
Illustrated Chips, London (22 November 1890), pp.4-5.



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Blackburn Standard

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Preston Guardian

North East

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South East

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Huddersfield Daily Chronical

Leeds Mercury

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