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**The British Yeomanry Cavalry,  
1794-1920**

**George Murray Hay**

University of Kent

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2011



## Abstract

This thesis examines the place of Britain's Yeomanry Cavalry within the wider context of the amateur military tradition between the French Revolutionary Wars and the reformation of the Territorial Army in 1920. Covering the most turbulent episodes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as the conflicts that marked its beginning and end, this thesis traces the development and evolution of the Yeomanry whilst questioning its place in British social history. To achieve these ends it routinely returns to three key themes: the Yeomanry Cavalry's relationship with the state, its interaction with society, and its place in the wider amateur military tradition.

It is argued in this study that the historiography of the amateur military movement has said too little about the Yeomanry, and much of what has been said centres on the combined experience with the Volunteers and Militia. Unlike the Volunteers, however, no text deals with the Yeomanry as a single institution. Though a number of studies have furthered our understanding for the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period, the history of this institution in the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is largely neglected. This thesis will redress this balance by assessing participation and by questioning the importance of the force in society; from the significance of its role as a constabulary, to the importance of its pageantry and presence to those involved and outside of the institution. It will tackle questions of social compositions, particularly the suggestion that the Yeomanry was a 'feudal' force, as well as the wider politics of the institution. Given its role in the Second South African War, its incorporation into the Territorial Force, and its involvement in the First World War, this study will also show the varied experience of reform and conflict by offering comparison with academic studies that have covered its sibling forces.

The evolution and changing nature of the Yeomanry is considered alongside the evolution and changing nature of the amateur military movement as a whole. The part it played in shifting perceptions in government and society are considered, both in the way that the force maintained a level of independence, and how it benefited from co-operation. Above all, the importance of the Yeomanry as a civilian movement will be juxtaposed against its military pretensions.

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George Murray Hay

October 2011

## Introduction

### Historiography, Research Questions, and Source Material

The Yeomanry Cavalry was a voluntary auxiliary military force formed during the French Revolutionary Wars to serve two purposes: to fight invasion and aid the civil power in the event of internal disorder. It played a role in defeating the limited French landing at Fishguard in 1797 and helped put down the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland. It was the institution responsible for the 'Peterloo' Massacre of 1819 and continued its 'constabulary' role into the 1880s. At the turn of the century it led the way in providing volunteers for the South African War, and between 1914 and 1916 it practically quadrupled in size. It went on to serve in a multitude of theatres in the First World War, both mounted and dismounted, and was finally reorganised in the 1920s on the re-establishment of the Territorial Army. Originally a mounted asset, it still exists in name today within the Territorial Army, having now taken on a variety of roles. With such a long and varied history, the Yeomanry Cavalry forms an important strand of Britain's 'amateur military tradition'. Professor Ian F. W. Beckett coined this phrase in 1991 to explain the historical British predilection for raising amateur and temporary soldiers in place of maintaining a constitutionally troubling standing army. In the accompanying text Beckett provided an overview of the development of British amateur military movements from their earliest manifestations through to 1945. Here he showed that civilian movements soon transcended fears of despotism to become vehicles for patriotism, recreation, and later to fulfil Victorian ideals of public service. When commenting on the Yeomanry Cavalry's political affiliations and its position in British defence policy, however, Beckett noted that much of the institution's history was, 'obscured by the absence of detailed research'.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from a 2005 Ph.D. thesis that attempted to tackle the subject of volunteer cavalry in Britain from 1776-1908, there has been no further efforts to rectify this issue.<sup>2</sup> This thesis is a study of the British Yeomanry Cavalry from its formation in 1794 through to its reorganisation after the First World War and aims to fill this research vacuum. Much more than this, however, it will also place the Yeomanry within the context of the wider amateur military tradition and advance

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<sup>1</sup> Beckett, I. F. W. *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558-1945* (MUP, 1991), p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> Gilks, A. D. 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry, 1776-1908.' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham. 2005).

many of the themes developed by Beckett and others working in the field. To achieve this it will discuss its relationship with the state; its role in social control, as an anti-invasion force, and as a constabulary; the scale of participation and its interaction with society; and the impact of war on all of these factors. As an institution the Yeomanry has been marginalised or ignored by many studies despite forming an important part of the nation's defences and acting as a vehicle for middle and upper-class involvement in the armed forces. This is most probably due to its size in comparison to the Rifle Volunteers, especially in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when the force was at its lowest ebb. However, such a comparison is misleading: not only did its ranks exceed 30,000 men in the 1820s, but it peaked at just shy of 90,000 in February 1916. What is more, this was a long-lived institution and an exceedingly wide-ranging, national movement that, contrary to popular belief, had developed urban interests early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Representing a specific section of society that was attracted to service by specific motives, this study will do much more than simply fill a historiographical gap. A study of this kind is vital to uncover and understand the Yeomanry's idiosyncrasies and to challenge a host of accepted truths.

Far from being a lone entity, the Yeomanry fits within a rich historical tradition of British amateur military movements. Extending from the 'common burdens' that dictated the raising of forces from the late seventh century, this tradition can still be seen in the Territorial Army today.<sup>3</sup> The growing historiography analysing this tradition suggests a continued interest in the subject, most recently expanded with Professor Ian Beckett's work on the centenary of the Territorial Army. This, however, as the author has noted, is a reference book for the consumption of those connected with the force.<sup>4</sup> It is only in other relatively modern work that the subject has been tackled with academic rigour. Though Alan Blackstock's work has comprehensively dealt with the Irish Yeomanry up to 1834, there still remains a lack of coverage of the force outside of Ireland and beyond these dates.<sup>5</sup> The limited work that has addressed the institution tends to be subjective or limited by broad analysis and it is both these antiquated and 'encompassing' approaches respectively that require academic attention. The causes of these issues can be explained in a number of ways. Firstly, the predominance of regimental histories has tended to fill the vacuum left by broader

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Beckett, I. F. W. *Territorials - A Century of Service*. DRA, Plymouth. 2008; and Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. x.

<sup>5</sup> Blackstock, A. *An Ascendancy Army - The Irish Yeomanry, 1796-1834* (Four Courts, Dublin, 1998).



texts, but it has also been motivated by different interests and has largely been for regimental or local consumption. Though certain volumes are extremely useful for factual purposes – particularly the late 19<sup>th</sup> century centennial works and those by Benson Freeman completed in the 1920s – they are limited in their analysis and are inherently constricted by their subject regiments. Secondly, central research materials are limited whilst regional resources are widely spread and richer in certain archives. A study of this county based institution must then draw on multiple records to achieve any real understanding of the movement. And lastly, absorbing fewer men than the infantry, the extent of participation and lack of regular regimental affiliations has made the institution less visible and understood in modern life beyond a passing knowledge of ‘Peterloo’. The size of the Yeomanry has been a sticking point in academic studies, with the force relegated to the sidelines of texts dealing with the broader amateur movement. Nonetheless, as already noted, its size is often misinterpreted and does not tell of its importance in mobilising a specific section of society.

The historiography of the amateur military tradition has developed as studies of specific institutions as well as defining events, but Yeomanry history also enters the remit of a wide range of historical schools. As a result, this literature review begins with texts dealing with the force’s natural historiographical home – the amateur military tradition – before covering bodies of literature concerning other subjects intimately bound to Yeomanry history. Beckett’s long spanning and recently republished *Amateur Military Tradition* not only cemented this phrase into the historian’s vernacular, but developed the methodology that has guided this and many other modern studies of the auxiliary forces. Furthermore, it is the only academic study to embrace a ‘movement’ paradigm from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century through to the end of the Second World War. However, with fewer than 300 pages of prose there is not room for exhaustive detail. There are, of course, very good reasons for this; reasons largely shared with the coverage of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period. Dedicated to identifying and analysing the wider amateur military movement, greater focus on individual institutions would be distracting. As a result, Beckett’s work is forced to omit detailed analysis in some areas and, as already mentioned, hints at the need for further investigation of the Yeomanry Cavalry.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 133.

Following a similar approach to Beckett's work on the amateur military tradition are those texts that have attempted to explain civilian participation in defence in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was the pressure of circumstances in the 1790s that drastically altered the nature of civilian input in national defence. From 1793 Britain was officially at war with the French Revolutionary government, and with an enemy operating as a nation under arms, the English Channel and the Royal Navy became a narrow barrier between Britain and her enemies. Invasion and Jacobin inspired insurrection became real possibilities – or at least were perceived to be – and with a French army camped in Boulogne, the deprived state of the poor, and the social consequences of industrialisation, this tension was increased. Social histories of the upheaval of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century have sought to understand the relationship between warfare, British society, and statehood in an effort to comprehend British nationalism and defensive movements. Interesting analysis of this kind can be found in books by John Brewer and Linda Colley, both of which chart the changing position of the British state and the reasons behind the success in expanding its powers internally and externally.<sup>7</sup> Volunteering throughout the Napoleonic Wars has also been addressed in detail by J. E. Cookson and Austin Gee, whilst Clive Emsley, D. J. V. Jones, and J. R. Western have considered the role and purpose of these forces and their relationship with the state.<sup>8</sup>

All of these texts, however, leave a legacy of conflicting explanations for civilian involvement in 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century warfare. Brewer argued that the power of central government to work the fiscal-military state model allowed it to extract the necessary resources from the people for the conduct of war, though his analysis ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1783. Linda Colley added social analysis to these arguments running from the Act of Union in 1707 through to Victoria's ascendancy to the throne in 1837. In an attempt to understand why people chose to support the established order and what they hoped to gain from their support, Colley

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<sup>7</sup> Brewer, J. *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (HUP, 1990); and Colley, L. *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, (YUP, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*; Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*; Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement*; Emsley, C. *Policing and its Context 1750-1870* (MacMillan, 1983); Emsley, C. 'The Military and Popular Disorder in England, 1790-1801' *JSAHR*. Vol. 61, No. 245, 1983, pp. 10-21, 96-112; Emsley, C. 'Repression, "Terror" and the Rule of Law in England during the Decade of the French Revolution' *The English Historical Review*. Vol. 100, No. 397, 1985, pp. 801-825; Jones, D. J. V 'Law Enforcement and Popular Disturbances in Wales, 1793-1835' *The Journal of Modern History*. Vol. 42, No. 4, 1970, pp. 496-523; and Western, J. R. 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force, 1793-1801', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 71, No. 281, 1956, pp. 603-614.

identified the forging of 'Britishness' through shared national beliefs and feelings that transcended class or political issues within the state. This helped to explain why Brewer's expansion of government had been tolerated, but it fell short of fully interacting with the expansion of British arms in the 1790s. What Cookson alternatively argued was that war provided little opportunity to advance the central authority's ability to make demands upon the population and that patriotism could in fact be subject to conditions. As he noted,

the greatest armed challenge the British state had ever faced up to this time was met by an armed populace whose service coincided with their interests and values rather than with the needs of the state and whose attitude to soldiering was totally inconsistent with any standing the army had as an instrument of national power.<sup>9</sup>

These observations were confirmed by Gee who narrowed the analysis to the volunteering experience, which he painted as more spontaneous and independent than subject to central direction. Furthermore, loyal in the sense of upholding constitutional propriety and the established order rather than being reactionary, anti-democratic or republican, the auxiliary forces were never a uniform movement or one motivated by the same ideals.<sup>10</sup> Though thoughts have developed from relatively unsophisticated theories regarding support for reactionary policy, work by Cookson and Gee has shown that the 'armed nation' was not simply an expression of anti-Painite loyalism or a reaction in defence of Church and King. Simpler motives such as patriotic obligation also seem to have influenced participation.

All of these works are influential in forming an understanding of the British state through the internal and external pressures of war at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but they are not without their issues. An immediate problem with much of the work concerning volunteering is generalisation. As such it is worth considering one of Austin Gee's concluding statements, that any attempt to characterise a volunteer movement would be to neglect the intrinsic variations that will always be found between the individual institutions.<sup>11</sup> It is these intrinsic variations that most accounts have abandoned and, whilst their strengths lie in collation and an encompassing

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<sup>9</sup> Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, p. 237.

<sup>10</sup> Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement*, pp. 8 & 74.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 262.

analysis, it also serves as an inherent weakness when differences are significant enough to deserve further study. In many respects this is not a large issue for the Napoleonic period as volunteering can be considered a mostly analogous experience, or at least one with shared aims. As the United Kingdom exited the war, however, the divisions between the auxiliary services are far more telling and it is here that analysis is drawn to a close.

In a similar fashion, Peter Dennis and Keith Mitchinson have written methodologically comparable texts concerning the development of the Territorial Force nearly a century later. The strength of Dennis's work is to be found in its coverage of the years between the Boer War and Great War and the Territorial Army's place in defence policy. Unfortunately, the text stops short of any detailed study of the reform period and the First World War – covering both in just 33 pages – and lacks engagement with the human questions concerning the Territorials. As a result, the Yeomanry is buried in the wider arguments concerning the application, governance, and funding of the Territorial Force.<sup>12</sup> Following on from this, Mitchinson's work has dealt with two important topics in respect to the Territorials and the wartime Volunteer Force: the first dealing with the political and military response to the threat of invasion and the ways to defeat a raid and potential march on London; the second dealing with the Territorial Force from the point of view of its administration under the County Territorial Associations introduced in 1908.<sup>13</sup> Again adopting a broad view, he has analysed the Territorial experience through the means of the Associations and the top down direction of the military and political authorities. Forming a useful part of the Territorial historiography, both texts will be used in this thesis where there is a need to contextualise the Yeomanry experience and explain the importance of bureaucracy and decision making to that experience. Whilst both have interesting things to say about the Yeomanry, understandably the focus is predominantly from outside of the institutions. Comprehensive though these texts are together in outlining the course of Territorial history, the length and focus of the books does not allow for protracted reflection on the individual parts of the movement. Searching for broader trends and experiences, these histories have buried the Yeomanry experience within overarching statements based on research combining

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<sup>12</sup> Dennis, P. *The Territorial Army, 1907-1940* (Boydell, Suffolk, 1987).

<sup>13</sup> Mitchinson, K. W. *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army, 1908-1919* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); and Mitchinson, K. W. *England's Last Hope: The Territorial Force, 1908-1914* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

the Volunteers and Militia. As a result they largely neglect significant regional variations between regiments as well as the important variations between institutions.

Complementing these broader texts is a body of literature dealing with specific elements of the amateur military tradition. Although amateur soldiering has distant lineage in Britain, the first organised manifestation of an auxiliary military force came in the form of the Militia. A large standing army had been anathema to the English since its introduction in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, there always being a preference for the navy to defend against invasion. Not only was the expense of such a force resented, but the political dangers were also apparent. As a result the army was not a large force before the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and it was thought to be politically wise to keep much of it beyond the shores of the United Kingdom. The Militia then acted as a constitutional counterweight to the standing army and prevented the need for a large domestic force. Though it was maintained through the 18<sup>th</sup> century by interminable war with France, it actually had its origins in the 1558 Militia Act.<sup>14</sup> J. R. Western's important 1965 work on the 18<sup>th</sup> century Militia largely examined the force in terms of its military effectiveness and economic impact. However, it raised important arguments regarding the symbolic purpose of the Militia in place of large standing armies and the way in which this related to the interests of the state and crown. In this respect it, too, laid the groundwork for future studies of amateur military movements from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup>

More recent work in the form of Eliga Gould's article on Militia reform between 1745 and 1760 has looked towards the motives that drove reform in the institution. Suggesting that the process drew landed society into a nationalised force and integrated the Militia with the forces of the crown, it is said that the king could better claim to represent the interests of the country.<sup>16</sup> Work on the Irish Militia is perhaps less developed, though Sir Henry McAnnally's notable work combined with Thomas Bartlett and Ivan Nelson's contributions do allow for Hibernian comparisons. Showing the 1793 institution to have social control functions, it provided the Castle with a monopoly of force by taking the place of the outlawed Volunteers. Though it coincided with the Catholic Relief Act and the ballot subsequently caused riots, it

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<sup>14</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> Western, J. R. *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century: The Story of a Political Issue, 1660-1802* (UTP, 1965), pp. 104-125, 245, 255-264, 345-346.

<sup>16</sup> Gould, E. H. 'To Strengthen the King's Hands: Dynastic Legitimacy, Militia Reform and Ideas of National Unity in England 1745-1760' *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 1991, pp. 346-348.

actually recruited well in this divided society and fulfilled a similar purpose to the British force by supplying drafts to the regular army. At the same time, however, it is clear that the unreliability born out of its predominantly catholic composition led to the birth of the controversial ascendancy force of the Irish Yeomanry.<sup>17</sup> The Yeomanry developed for quite different reasons elsewhere in the United Kingdom, although it might still be said that it was structured to appeal to a particular section of society.

This relationship between the Irish Yeomanry and other auxiliary forces offers another opportunity for comparison with the British force. As a result, further context and comparison will be sought from Alan Blackstock's comprehensive work on the Irish Yeomanry. This study covers the life of the Irish force from its early trials facing the insurrection and invasion, through to its suspension as a result of its patent sectarianism and conservatism. Not entirely comparable to the British force even in terms of service, the Irish Yeomanry was a predominantly Protestant auxiliary army that would embrace Orangeism and work in the interests of the Ascendancy. Formed of both infantry and cavalry, its role was essentially the same, but the country in which it existed was quite different. With no comparable invasion, and with disaffection a 'minority pastime' and certainly less violent, British society was not divided in any similar way and did not tend to splinter into widespread resistance. Initially a defence against invasion, the Irish Yeomanry developed in the Protestant self-defence tradition and became a rallying point against United Irishmen and Defenders. Instead of developing into a force for the protection of property, the constitution, economic well-being, or life, it stood in the way of Catholic Emancipation and became a political tool exploited by all sides until eventually wound up completely in 1834.<sup>18</sup> Although exhibiting substantial differences in their composition and actions, Blackstock's findings will be used throughout this thesis to offer a wider understanding of volunteer movements and to compare the different approaches adopted in Ireland and Britain. Also, given that Blackstock's study comes to an end in 1834 and there is no comparable study for the rebirth of the force during the Second Boer War, it will fall to this thesis to address the later manifestations of

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<sup>17</sup> McAnnally, Sir. H. *The Irish Militia, 1793-1816: A Social and Military Study* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1949); Bartlett, T. 'An End to Moral Economy: The Irish Militia Disturbances of 1793' *Past & Present*, No. 99, 1983, pp. 41-64; Bartlett, T. 'Defence, Counter-Insurgency and Rebellion: Ireland, 1793-1803' in Bartlett, T. and Jeffery, K. (eds) *A Military History of Ireland* (CUP, 1996), pp. 247-293; and Nelson, I. F. *The Irish Militia, 1793-1802*. (Four Courts, Dublin, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Blackstock, *An Ascendancy Army*, pp. 296-301.

the Irish Yeomanry. This will then cover its use during the South African War, its conversion to the Special Reserve in 1908, and the part it played in the First World War.

Though only the Militia and Yeomanry survived the Napoleonic period, the Rifle Volunteers were reconstituted in 1859 and have formed the basis of two texts written by Ian Beckett and Hugh Cunningham. Both are able to add bulk to the synthesised scrutiny of *The Amateur Military Tradition*, providing detailed analysis of social compositions, central and public relations, and the impact of changes to both through the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the Haldane reforms of 1908. Both concluding that the most constructive contributions of the force were the moral assumptions underlying the movement and the projection of military values on the public, it is clear that its part in the structure of Victorian and Edwardian Britain was important. As a result, these texts will provide regular comparative and contextual details throughout this thesis to help build a comparable understanding of the Yeomanry.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps the most relevant text in the existing historiography of the amateur military tradition is Andrew D. Gilks's unpublished Ph.D. thesis completed in 2005. Though this thesis hints at a potential duplication of effort, it actually suffers from a number of weaknesses. First and foremost is the depth of research and focus; the first often showing an over-reliance on secondary sources and the latter frequently missing the nuances of the movement in favour of narrative. Very much top down in its focus, at times the thesis is also digressive, with uniform and biographical details weighing too heavily on footnotes and adding little academic value. Amongst the largest criticisms of Gilks's work, however, is the occasional lack of context and the attempt to raise the profile of other volunteer cavalry forces at the expense of the Yeomanry. Context is supplied by the two 'competing' cavalry forces without paying proper attention to the amateur military tradition or the formative years and the enduring social implications of those events. Gilks has also relied on a limited number of secondary sources instead of archival work and, as a result, his conclusions lack analysis. Gilks's thesis will be scrutinised with the benefit of documentary material

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<sup>19</sup> Beckett, I. F. W. *Riflemen Form: A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement 1859-1908* (MUP, 1991), pp. 259-260; and Cunningham, H. *The Volunteer Force: A Social and Political History* (Croom Helm, London, 1975), p. 123.

where paths of research cross so that the place of the 'volunteer cavalry' in British history may be properly advanced within the bounds of the standing literature.<sup>20</sup>

Though this thesis is arranged to address a number of key themes, certain events have demanded individual attention. As a result, two chapters within this thesis are dedicated to the Yeomanry experience in the Second Boer War and First World War. Amateur participation in these wars has already received separate attention in a distinct strand of the historiography, but, once again, coverage of the Yeomanry is very limited. Unlike Cunningham, Beckett covered the Rifle Volunteer experience in South Africa in his work on that force and provided coverage of all the auxiliaries in *The Amateur Military Tradition*. Although both are useful in an effort to provide context, certain aspects of the Yeomanry's involvement remain obscured, undeveloped, or contentious. In particular, the composition of the Imperial Yeomanry has been subject to some controversy. This was initiated by Richard Price when he deliberately skewed his results to serve an agenda: that the working-class never supported the war, but participated because of a weak labour market.<sup>21</sup> Edward Spiers has shown that this was patently untrue for the United Kingdom as a whole and, more specifically, in Scotland, where even striking riveters and joiners celebrated the successes at Paardeberg and Ladysmith and effectively silenced pro-Boer sentiment.<sup>22</sup> Whilst there have also been a number of attempts to correct this conjecture in relation to recruitment in the Imperial Yeomanry, none has provided a conclusive analysis.<sup>23</sup> Though coverage of the war – including the use and effectiveness of the Yeomanry – has been much better served by historians such as Will Bennett, Thomas Pakenham, and the Marquis of Anglesey, there are distinct weaknesses in the analysis of participation in the Imperial Yeomanry and the effects the events had on the home force.<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps the most direct attempt to engage with the institution came in Elaine McFarland's article regarding the Scottish Imperial Yeomanry. Unfortunately, much

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<sup>20</sup> Gilks, 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry', pp. 124 & 160-161.

<sup>21</sup> Price, R. *An Imperial War and the British Working Class: Working Class Attitudes and Reactions to the Boer War, 1899-1902* (Routledge, London, 1972).

<sup>22</sup> Spiers, E. M. *The Scottish Soldier and Empire, 1854-1902* (EUP, 2006), pp. 171-174; and Spiers, E. *The Army and Society, 1815-1914* (Longman, 1980), p. 44.

<sup>23</sup> Miller, S. M. *Volunteers on the Veld – British Citizen-Soldiers and the South African War, 1899-1902* (UOP, 2007), p. 68; Bennett, W. *Absent-Minded Beggars – Yeomanry and Volunteers in the Boer War* (Leo Cooper, Barnsley, 1999), pp. 17 & 174; and Gilks, A. D. 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry', pp. 388-396.

<sup>24</sup> Bennett, *Absent-Minded Beggars*; Pakenham, T. *The Boer War* (Abacus, London, 1992); Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry, 1899 to 1913 – Vol. IV* (Secker & Warburg, London, 1986).



of the early history is misunderstood, in part due to a lack of suitable resources. The result is that the basis for a number of arguments is weakened by a want for wider understanding. In an effort to distinguish between the Imperial Yeomanry and its predecessor, McFarland argues that the force underwent 'cultural redefinition' to take it away from its pompous county society background and turn it into a force to win back Scottish military pride after the blow of Black Week.<sup>25</sup> Given the existence of urban corps in Scotland and further afield, there is more to be discussed regarding how radical – and how successful – this break really was. Furthermore, McFarland does not seem to appreciate the home defence nature of the force or that, before March 1915, there existed no obligation for recruits to serve overseas. For this reason it is unfair to victimise the structure of the Yeomanry Cavalry in terms of imperial defence prior to the Imperial Yeomanry, simply because it was never a force designed for this purpose. Despite these criticisms, McFarland's arguments are well structured and the purpose of this thesis will be to challenge and expand from this study, both geographically and chronologically.

In the case of the First World War, academic coverage is mixed. Beckett has again provided the best collective overview of the auxiliary forces, though Helen McCartney has also added to the body of literature concerning the Territorial infantry.<sup>26</sup> The former text raises a number of interesting questions and provides structure for the analysis in this thesis, though on the whole little space is dedicated to the Yeomanry's war experience. The latter text focuses on the First World War experience of the 1/6th and 1/10th Territorial Battalions of the King's Liverpool Regiment and is divided into three sections. The first establishes that the identities of the men in question as both civilians and soldiers were often inextricably entwined, particularly in terms of class, ethnicity, and regional identification. The second section explores how the soldiers' perception of themselves as civilians with a continuing stake in civilian society shaped their attitudes toward, and relationship with, the British Army as an institution. And the third section of the book focuses on the war fought by the Liverpool battalions on the Western Front and on how their experience of combat and mass casualties affected their ideals and attitudes. Again, this structure

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<sup>25</sup> McFarland, E. W. "'Empire-Enlarging Genius": Scottish Imperial Yeomanry Volunteers in the Boer War', *War in History*, Vol. 13, No. 7, 2006, pp. 302-303.

<sup>26</sup> Beckett, I. F. W. 'The Territorial Force' in Beckett, I.F.W. Simpson, K. (eds.) *A Nation in Arms*. (MUP, 1985), pp. 127-163; and McCartney, H. B. *Citizen Soldiers - The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War*. (CUP, 2005).

has been influential in shaping the seventh chapter. Nonetheless, on the whole, operations in the Dardanelles and the Middle-East have always attracted less attention and, given that a significant part of the Yeomanry story took place in these theatres, there is much to be said about the part it played in these operations. For those mounted on the Western Front, the story has been taken up by the cavalry historians, but there is a need to settle the nuances between the regular and auxiliary force and to look at the home front and mobilisation experience in greater detail.<sup>27</sup>

Although the Yeomanry has a natural home amongst the historiography of the amateur military tradition, the force's responsibilities and composition reveal a need to view it through the lens of other historical schools. One such area is policing. It was the pressing nature of circumstances that allowed for the unusual relationship between central government and the volunteers before 1815, but with the ending of war only the Yeomanry and Militia survived before 1859. Much more must be said regarding the reasons for this survival and how it fitted with government policy and the wider understanding of the relationship between state and citizen forces. Paramount to this analysis is the importance of the Yeomanry as a constabulary force. Stanley Palmer's article on military aid to the civil power attempted to survey the use of armed force to control crowds between 1660 and 1850. Understandably, a date range of 200 years has not allowed for a great deal of focus. As a result the analysis of the Yeomanry acting in aid of the civil power is underdeveloped and often grouped with general military assistance.<sup>28</sup> Beckett has perhaps provided the most purposeful analysis of this subject, identifying its contribution as well as its efficiency. Nonetheless, the discussion is still limited and further development has produced new insights. The decision not to grant the Rifle Volunteers policing powers after 1859 whilst the Yeomanry maintained this power (at least in law) up to the Haldane reforms of 1908, for example, deserves further discussion.<sup>29</sup> The Yeomanry's involvement in controlling the tumultuous events that plagued the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century say a good deal more about British law enforcement than the single iconic disaster at 'Peterloo'. Though that event is rightly inseparable from the Manchester and Salford

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<sup>27</sup> Badsey, s. *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry, 1880-1918* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2008); and Kenyon, D. 'British Cavalry on the Western Front, 1916-1918' (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cranfield, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Palmer, S. H. 'Calling Out the Troops – The Military, the Law, and Public Order in England, 1650-1850' *JSAHR*, Vol. 56, 1976, pp. 198-214.

<sup>29</sup> Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, pp. 135-142 & 146-149; and *Manual of Military Law, 1907*, (HMSO, 1907), pp. 219 & 205.

Yeomanry, the involvement of the force as a whole in constabulary work went far beyond 1819, and would continue until 1885.

Alongside the military contribution to keeping order was the growing presence of the professional police, something that has generated a separate and extensive body of literature. Clive Emsley and Stanley Palmer might be seen to occupy the vanguard of this school, both having written extensively on the subject. Emsley's substantial contribution mostly concerns the relationship between crime, society, and the police, though his interests are predominantly located in the development of professional forces.<sup>30</sup> The more influential text to this thesis is Palmer's comparative work of British and Irish law enforcement.<sup>31</sup> Showing that very different conditions demanded very different methods, Palmer's work juxtaposes the early development of armed constabularies in Ireland against the continued reliance on the retrograde system of magistrates and their often temporarily requisitioned support on the British mainland. Here the author has identified various models of law enforcement, even discussing the place of the Yeomanry in both systems and why the Irish force was disbanded in the 1830s whilst its British counterpart continued to support the civil power. However, as with the same author's already mentioned article, the Yeomanry are often included as part of the general military response. Furthermore, the extent of its usage is at times underestimated and its methods are not properly analysed.

Given the Yeomanry's connection to county society and its largely rural roots, there is also a need to explore its place within rural history. The namesake journal in this field originally stated its interests as: agricultural history; historical ecology; folklore; popular culture and religion; rural literature; landscape history, archaeology and material culture; vernacular architecture; ethnography, anthropology and rural sociology; the study of women in rural societies; relationships between the urban and the rural; and the politics of rural societies.<sup>32</sup> Although many of these themes will be touched upon in this thesis, they will be covered within the military context, an area not alluded to in the journal's stated interests. Of course, this is not to say that this has been entirely omitted from the field's flagship journal: there are even brief mentions

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<sup>30</sup> See for example: Emsley, C. *The Great British Bobby: A History of British Policing from the 18th Century to the Present* (London, Quercus, 2009); *Crime, police and penal policy: European experiences 1750-1940* (OUP, 2007); *Gendarmes and the State in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (OUP, 1999); and *The English Police: A Political and Social History* (Longman, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> Palmer, S. H. *Police and Protest in England and Ireland 1780-1850*. (CUP, 1988).

<sup>32</sup> Bellamy, L., Snell, K. D. M., and Williamson, T. 'Rural History: The Prospect Before Us' *Rural History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1990, pp. 1-2.

of the Yeomanry in articles regarding the Swing Riots by Steve Poole and Carl Griffin, as well as passing coverage in Keith Grieves's article concerning rural paternalism and recruiting in Sussex during the First World War.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, the connection between amateur military institutions and county society remains underdeveloped. As such, those fundamental questions regarding class alliances, social climbing, and deference in rural life need to be expanded with the inclusion of this significant example.

Similar to these examples, work on the aristocracy has made very little of military matters in general, let alone the Yeomanry. David Cannadine's treatise *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* essentially provides a critique of the hasty reduction of power exercised by Britain's elite from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, not enough is made of the connection between the county gentry and the regiments of the auxiliaries. Hinting, for example, at the connection between new peerages and, 'the bench, the county council, the Yeomanry, or service as a county MP', not much more is made of the observation or its significance.<sup>35</sup> In much the same way, the work of J. V. Beckett and William D. Rubenstein has made similar omissions, with no mention of the auxiliary forces and only passing reference to the military generally.<sup>36</sup> Although admittedly this may well not be the first port of call for books of this type, it seems unusual that all of these prominent historians of the wealthy and powerful have neglected to dedicate adequate space to the outpouring of money and time into these institutions. The Yeomanry Cavalry shows these links better than most and, however their social position was reflected in the ranks, high society's presence and unmistakable influence is indisputable in its officer corps.

Beyond academic history there is also a body of popular and self-serving literature. The most common amongst the latter are contemporary regimental histories. Understandably, these texts have specific weaknesses. Firstly, privately

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<sup>33</sup> Poole, S. "A lasting and salutary warning": Incendiarism, Rural Order and England's Last Scene of Crime Execution" *Rural History*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2008, pp. 163-177; Griffin, C. J. "Policy on the Hoof": Sir Robert Peel, Sir Edward Knatchbull and the Trial of the Elham Machine Breakers, 1830' *Rural History*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2004, pp. 127-148; and Grieves, K. "Lowther's Lambs": Rural Paternalism and Voluntary Recruitment in the First World War' *Rural History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1994, pp. 55-75.

<sup>34</sup> Cannadine, D. *The Decline and fall of the British Aristocracy* (YUP, 1990).

<sup>35</sup> Cannadine, *The Decline and fall of the British Aristocracy*, p. 198.

<sup>36</sup> Beckett, J. V. *The Aristocracy in England, 1660-1914* (Blackwell, 1989); Rubenstein, W. D. *Men of Property: The Very Wealthy in Britain Since the Industrial Revolution* (Croom Helm, London, 1981); Rubenstein, W. D. 'Education and the Social Origins of British Élites 1880-1970' *Past & Present*, No. 112, 1986, pp. 163-207; and Rubenstein, W. D. 'New Men of Wealth and the Purchase of Land in Nineteenth-Century Britain' *Past & Present*, No. 92, 1981, pp. 125-147.

penned and published accounts might be expected to offer little of the negative aspects or criticisms of the service. Secondly, on many issues, they cannot stand alone given the underdeveloped style of the text. Nonetheless, though they typically offer a myopic view of regimental life, many were also written using a host of private documents and personal memoirs long since unavailable. The distinction to be drawn within this literature is between the modern, amateur accounts and those written before the Second World War, which typically utilise the rarer documents. Nineteenth century accounts – specifically those written for centenary celebrations in the 1890s – are of particular value for their introspection. Also worthy of mention are those written and edited by Benson Freeman. Often put together in the 1920s and 1930s, he built upon a number of late 19<sup>th</sup> century regimental histories and expanded their contents up to the publishing dates.<sup>37</sup> Though they all provide a local flavour to the history, the vast array of these largely privately published accounts allow for a larger picture to be pieced together. Perhaps most significantly, however, many draw on documents and oral history that are no longer available.

The Yeomanry has even been subject to popular histories in more recent years. Amongst the most proficient is P. J. R. Mileham's, which provides a balance of imagery and text to communicate the history to the non-specialist.<sup>38</sup> Beyond this principal example, however, the majority of what is termed 'pictorial history' concerns itself with uniform and related paraphernalia. Fine examples of this can be found in the series written by Barlow and Smith. Again for general interest consumption, these provide potted regimental histories utilising newspaper extracts and some archival sources, but ultimately focus on the most visually important of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Yeomanry attributes: uniform.<sup>39</sup> The lack of documentary research in all these accounts has produced the perpetuation of stereotypes, further highlighting the difficulty in identifying trends based on a small bed of research. Mileham's work is

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<sup>37</sup> Cooper, W. S. *A History of the Ayrshire Yeomanry Cavalry*. (Douglas, Edinburgh, 1881); Leary, F. *The Earl of Chester's Regiment of Yeomanry Cavalry – its Formation and Services, 1797-1897*. (Ballantyne, Edinburgh, 1898); Quin, W. H. Wyndham. *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Gloucestershire and Monmouth*. (Westley's Library, 1898); Fellows, G. & Freeman, B. *Historical Records of the South Nottinghamshire Hussars Yeomanry, 1794-1924* (Gale & Polden, Aldershot, 1928); Freeman, B. *Historical Records of the Hampshire Carabiniers Yeomanry*, (MS. Hampshire Regiment Museum, Winchester); Stonham, C. and Freeman, B. *Historical Records of the Middlesex Yeomanry, 1797-1927*. (Privately printed, 1930). For the full list see bibliography.

<sup>38</sup> Mileham, P. J. R. *The Yeomanry Regiments – A Pictorial History*. (Spellmount, Tunbridge Wells, 1985).

<sup>39</sup> Barlow, L. & Smith, R. J. *The Uniforms of the British Yeomanry Force 1794-1914* (Ogilby Trust, Aldershot, C.1982).

unpretentious and in many ways modest in light of its content, but it should be viewed as a combined regimental history containing a collection of interesting and rare photographs. Whilst it is probably the best introduction to Yeomanry history in print, questions of academic interest are generally omitted.

The historiography of the amateur military tradition is extensive and, although the dates do not coincide and the conclusions have little bearing on this thesis, it has seen further coverage in texts concerning the Home Guard in the Second World War by the likes of S. P. McKenzie, and Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird.<sup>40</sup> The Yeomanry, however, has only ever been documented in grouped studies by academic historians. Unlike the Rifle Volunteers, the Yeomanry Cavalry has not been the subject of an extended, single volume analysis. Long spanning and combined studies have, as a result, failed to do the subject justice due to the desire to identify shared trends. Amateur studies, though often producing readable narratives, have failed in historical analysis. There are, undeniably, questions that will be asked here that have appeared in other texts. There are also questions that will require the bridging of gaps between historical school and methods. However, by bringing detailed study to this neglected field, this thesis will bring parity with other manifestations of the amateur military tradition whilst also developing our understanding in broader historical areas.

The following section outlines the key arguments and chapter structures. Civilian military institutions are as inherently complex as their contradictory name might suggest. Made up as they were of men otherwise employed, those who served with them adopted military discipline and habits through choice and their background is largely what coloured the force. As a result the dynamic that existed between officers and men becomes essential to this story, just as the social compositions of both sections of the force will indicate their place in society. This analysis will form part of the themes running through these chapters addressing the Yeomanry's role and interaction with the state, the social aspects of membership and relations with the public, and the phenomenon of the amateur military tradition.

The first chapter will assess the politics, organisation, and funding of the Yeomanry. Looking at the relationship between central authority and that devolved to

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<sup>40</sup> Mackenzie, S. P. *The Home Guard: A Military and Political History* (OUP, 1995); and Summerfield, P. and Bird, C. Peniston. *Contesting Home Defence: Men, Women and the Home Guard in the Second World War* (MUP, 2007).

the provinces, this chapter will assess the Yeomanry's political power, its cost, its ability to fight for its interests, and its general interaction with the state in light of a consistently changing world. Political parties exchanged power on numerous occasions and the changes this induced in the Yeomanry will be gauged alongside the politics of the institution. The 19<sup>th</sup> century culminated in three commissions dedicated to analysing the force which were closely followed by the army reforms of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; how the force dealt with this central intrusion will be addressed in this chapter, as will their re-establishment in 1920.

The officer corps will form the basis for the second chapter. Historiographically held up as a bastion of the aristocracy and as part of a wider system of patronage and power, this chapter will assess the composition of the force's officers and their motivation to serve in the Yeomanry. Beyond this, there will also be an analysis of the culture of Yeomanry officership, addressing examples of social mobility; the wider connections to county society; the question of expense; the importance of titles of authority; and the ability of leadership. Central in raising manpower and supporting corps, this chapter will identify key trends in officership as well as uncover divergences from understood norms.

The rank and file of the Yeomanry will then form the third chapter, predominantly to assess the argument that the force was 'feudal'. One of the relics of historical analysis, the accuracy of envisioned paternalism and estate recruitment will be scrutinised for divergence and change. Elsewhere, attention will be directed at the massive regional diversity of recruiting as well as the impact of unusual events such as the overflow of enthusiasm from the South African War. Maintaining a particularly rigid and enduring stereotype, recruiting the other ranks of the Yeomanry has been considered an accepted fact without a great deal of exploration. The opportunity to rectify this situation will be taken in this chapter.

The fourth chapter will begin the second section of this thesis by assessing the role and efficiency of the Yeomanry. Discussing the force's role in aid of the civil power, it will analyse the current thought regarding the development of policing in the United Kingdom and the place of the Yeomanry within that context. Prior to the mid-1850s there was no legal requirement for counties to raise and keep a constabulary and, as a result, the Yeomanry frequently acted as an emergency 'police'. Questions will be asked of the role and efficiency of the Yeomanry; the opinion of magistrates

and the military; the local and central reasons for resistance to the police movement; and the political and social ramifications of constabulary work for the Yeomanry.

The penultimate chapter will deal with the Yeomanry at war between 1899 and 1902 in South Africa. It is here, and during the First World War, that documentary evidence is particularly prevalent. Using a combination of rich archival sources alongside early regimental histories will bring a closer understanding of how the Yeomanry reacted to this unusual war. As a result, questions will be asked of recruitment; officer promotion; training and preparation; the decisions and difficulties behind mobilising a home defence force for overseas service; and, of course, the obvious questions regarding performance. As the first proper trial of Yeomanry manpower, it will be important to question the role it played in the conflict and thus understand the difficulties faced from 1914.

The final chapter will then deal with the Yeomanry's experience of the First World War. The focus will follow much the same path as that of the previous chapter, but will also deal with preparations for war as well as conflict-specific questions. This will include analysis of the regimental system; the cavalry question; the home defence question; the search for a role; and the significance of the 74<sup>th</sup> Division. With perhaps the largest number of unanswered questions for any First World War fighting force, the Yeomanry might well be considered a forgotten army. It will be a significant objective of this thesis to redress the balance of research between the Territorials and 'Kitchener' forces and the many thousands of fighting Yeomanry. This chapter will discuss the conflicting desires faced by many yeomen and explore the reasons behind the unusual course of their war.

What follows are the documentary resources that this study will rely upon; for the most part, archives and documents that have seen little historical attention. The regimental histories that have already been mentioned in the literature review are markedly antiquarian in method, material, and conclusions. Those published as centenary celebrations in the 1890s or soon after the wars of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, serve an essential purpose. Written as memoirs and with documents and memories that are no longer available, many hold information that is otherwise lost to archival historians. Undeniably partisan in places, they also provide a looking glass into regimental self-reflection, something that is otherwise very difficult to achieve. Although many are out of print, they are available at the Imperial War Museum, the British Library, and the National Army Museum.



Secondly, there are surviving Yeomanry regimental records that are found at a number of County Record Offices and Military Museums across the UK. Particularly rich collections of these records can be found for the following corps: the 1st County of London (Middlesex) Yeomanry at the London Metropolitan Archives; the 3<sup>rd</sup> County of London (Sharpshooters) Yeomanry and the Queen's Own West Kent Yeomanry at the Kent and Sharpshooters Yeomanry Museum; the Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars at the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies; the Royal 1<sup>st</sup> Devon Yeomanry and Royal North Devon Hussars at the Devon Record Office; the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry at the Dorset History Centre; the Fife, Forfar, East Lothian, and Midlothian Yeomanry (including the later Lothians and Border Horse) at the National Archives of Scotland; Royal East Kent Mounted Rifles at the Centre for Kentish Studies; the Essex Yeomanry at the Essex Record Office; the Hampshire Carabiners Yeomanry at the Hampshire Regiment Museum; the Northamptonshire Yeomanry at the Northamptonshire Record Office; The Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars at the Oxfordshire Record Office; the Queen's Own Royal Staffordshire Yeomanry at Staffordshire Record Office; the Sussex Yeomanry at the West Sussex Record Office and Petworth House Archives; the Warwickshire Yeomanry at the Warwickshire Record Office; and the Westmoreland and Cumberland Yeomanry at Carlisle Record Office. These particular regimental archives have been chosen for the high incidence of muster rolls, correspondence, regimental orders, and other internal communications found within them. They will form the backbone of a large proportion of this study, and, in particular, chapters two and three on the officer corps and the rank and file. With the availability of muster rolls it is possible to identify the social standing of the force, which will open up answers to other questions in this thesis.

Thirdly, the Home Office and War Office papers held at The National Archives at Kew contain a wealth of information regarding the Yeomanry that will tie into every chapter of this thesis. The Home Office papers cover the administration of the force between 1794 and March 1855, when this responsibility was transferred to the War Office. They also contain correspondence concerning law and order, particularly interesting for the reports provided during the 'Swing' Riots and other serious disturbances. Fairly well spread within the HO series from 33-64, these documents form part of the constant communication between regiments and local and central administration. Similarly, War Office series including WO 13, 32, 43, 44, and

95 will be utilised for much the same purposes, the last – the First World War and Army of Occupation War Diaries – providing insight into the war experience. These papers are important in assessing the duties of the force and its relationship to central government and are of particular use to chapters one, four, five, and six. A wide variety of other files are also included in other collections, such as the CAB and PRO series. Also found at The National Archives are the officers' files for the First World War (WO 374 series), obviously lending themselves to chapter six when analysing promotion inside and outside the force and the general effects of the conflict. A final resource at the TNA are the *Army Lists*, effectively plotting the careers of officers in all branches of the British army. Allowing for a database project, this resource will be instrumental in producing patterns of promotion as well as identifying individuals worthy of in-depth study for chapter two and six.

Fourthly, there are official publications such as Hansard, Parliamentary Reports, Annual Returns for the British Army, and a whole variety of other British government publications regarding the Yeomanry and volunteer movement. Ranging from statistics of strength and recruitment to whole committee reports concerning changes to the Yeomanry, these publications are essential for discerning central opinion as well as for providing the minutes of extensive interviews. What is more, a number of professional journals will provide insight into training and other force-specific questions. The *Cavalry Journal*, *Army Review*, and the *United Service Magazine* in its various forms are a few examples of such periodicals.

Finally, there are the private papers of soldiers and newspaper archives. The National Archives of Scotland contain a host of regimental documents now centralised in Edinburgh, whilst the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives contains a wealth of useful information, typically garnered from the higher ranks of the army. Other papers of this ilk are found in the National Army Museum and Imperial War Museum, the latter of which also contains the sound archive, which contains interviews covering the Boer and First World Wars. Newspapers have also been accessed through the online archives supplied by the British Library's *19<sup>th</sup> Century Newspapers and Periodicals* project, *The Illustrated London News*, and *The Times*, but have also been consulted at Colindale. All of these resources will contribute to every chapter; private papers because of the different insight that they offer, and newspapers as the main voice of communication between the civilian

population and the auxiliary forces. These newspapers will be of particular importance throughout this study, discussing the public face of the Yeomanry.

Chronologically this thesis will address the Yeomanry from its conception through to its reconstruction in 1920. These 126 years witnessed enormous shifts in society, to an extent only rivalled by the remaining 20<sup>th</sup> century. The profound impact this had on the Yeomanry Cavalry is not to be underestimated as they were subjected to the same conditions. Theirs is a long and varied history, dotted with controversy and inefficiency, but also interspersed with moments of brilliance and sacrifice. With substantial documentary archives to work with, new insights and understandings will be made of this important group of civilians in uniform.

## Chapter I

### Politics, Organisation, and Funding

With the rise and fall of foreign and domestic threats, the amateur military forces of the United Kingdom have seen undulating support from British governments. Always a cheaper alternative to a standing army, auxiliary forces also had the added benefit of rallying the people behind a national cause and encouraging loyalty. In peacetime, however, the expense can seem frivolous and unnecessary, especially if efficiency is questionable. Furthermore, with the continued importance of local authority, central departments had to control and communicate with units through local government. Despite these uncertainties, the Yeomanry Cavalry successfully navigated its way through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, avoiding the retrenchment and disbandment suffered by most of its sibling institutions.

With cross-Channel revolutionary fear growing to fever pitch with the death of Louis XVI and the 'reign of terror', the 1793 *levée en masse* added the possibility of raids or invasion. At the outset these fears manifested themselves in loyalist associations – essentially publishers of anti-revolutionary materials and talking shops against radical societies – but many would soon after make significant contributions to later more active movements through subscriptions taken in their name.<sup>1</sup> One such organisation was the Yeomanry Cavalry, yet its *raison d'être* was to be twofold and its composition socially and geographically unusual from the start. Although the earliest corps' were distinguished by their coastal character, it did not take long for the movement to develop national coverage and stretch inland. Within the first two years of the force's existence, approximately one third of its strength was found in Yorkshire, the Midlands, and Gloucestershire, whilst only 40 per cent was found in the coastal counties of the south as well as along the eastern seaboard. This strength was reflected in the number of corps which expanded from 32 in 1794, to 60 in 1810, and 65 by 1820. By this time there was clearly no particular adhesion to the coastal areas.<sup>2</sup> The simple explanation for this rapid and broad development can be found in a government circular of March 1794 which stated the Yeomanry was, 'liable to be

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<sup>1</sup> Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, pp. 27-28; Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 75; *BPP*: 182, 1810: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1809; and *BPP*: 189, 1821: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1820.

called out...for the suppression of riot or tumult...[or] in case of invasion.’<sup>3</sup> If the two were not to be directly linked – as they were in Ireland in 1798 – then the government was prepared to control them as separate and individual developments, factoring in the threat of unaided domestic revolution.

At least in part, the Yeomanry then existed as an anti-revolutionary institution and as a result its services were not deemed redundant after the war with France came to an end. Not forced into the Local Militia and disbanded like the Volunteers, the Yeomanry continued its service beyond 1815 when a combination of political and economic factors continued to encourage the kind of potent atmosphere that harbours radical agitation. It was from this milieu that a number of long-lived popular movements found their roots and would go on to plague national stability throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But with labour and reform riots fading into a memory of the 1830s, Chartism – despite its undoubtedly dangerous pretensions – was also on the wane before the 1850s. As county constabularies became entrenched by 1856, an organised and constitutionally acceptable counterweight to domestic unrest was introduced. Policed by unarmed (outside of Ireland) civilians who were subject to civilian law, there was rarely a need to unleash politically questionable military forces to control the populace. Even if such a case arose, the efficiency and reach of the railways by this date meant that regular, professional support should always be available at short notice. Similarly, Victorian invasion scares were far from exceptional, but their effects were commonly short lived and, in the case of the Yeomanry, probably raised more questions regarding efficiency. How then did a force originally destined to counter invasion and domestic tumult survive into the 20<sup>th</sup> century when at least the second rationale had come to an end by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? The answer to this question, as well as those regarding political affiliation and survival in the face of calamity, can only be answered by analysing the underlying statutes and government relations that coloured the force’s history. This chapter will discuss the relationship between central authority and the Yeomanry as a part of the complex nature of county power, and will address the controversial question of function, the level of central intervention, and the politicisation of its members.

With such substantial quantities of the regular army distributed in garrisons in the 1790s, it was expedient to fill the gaps on the coast with

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Q. L.’ *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire, 1794-1913* (Simpson, Devizes, 1914), p. 3.

voluntary forces. However, initial suggestions of raising men through voluntary contribution created concern within parliament by appearing to be an unsanctioned levy of men and money. Nonetheless, by March 1794 hasty legislation was passed that accepted the voluntary augmentation of the Militia as well as the raising of voluntary forces through public conscription; as a result an additional 5,000 Militia and 6,000 fencibles were raised across the country.<sup>4</sup> In addition, substantial sums were bequeathed to local defence by loyalist associations which began two waves of volunteering between 1794 and 1795 and then 1797 and 1798.<sup>5</sup> Instead of being solely 'police' forces, the Yeomanry raised at this time concerned themselves with preparing for invasion, developing in some cases elaborate plans for driving livestock inland and for the utilisation of scorched earth policies.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, it has been suggested by Cookson that the Yeomanry was rapidly incorporated into existing defence plans because of its ready ability to play a part in 'driving the country' in the event of invasion.<sup>7</sup> For the most part, however, their enthusiasm was unnecessary, with a determined invasion never coming to fruition. Apart from the limited French landing in Ireland and their combined victory with the United Irishmen at Castlebar, there were few comparable episodes when British defences were stretched.<sup>8</sup> The abortive attempt at a landing by the French 'Black Legion' at Fishguard a year earlier had met with even less success, despite the haphazard response. On that occasion a small French force of mainly convicts and royalist prisoners disembarked on the Welsh coast only to surrender a few days later because of a failure of morale and a taste for pillage.<sup>9</sup> Predictably, however, it encouraged the British population into reactionary loyalist participation.

Motivated by a host of concerns and at some level reliant on government interest and support, undulating effective strength figures for the Yeomanry became the norm throughout the institution's history. Charts 1.1 and 1.2 provide a visual representation of this strength.

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<sup>4</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 74; and Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement*, p. 20.

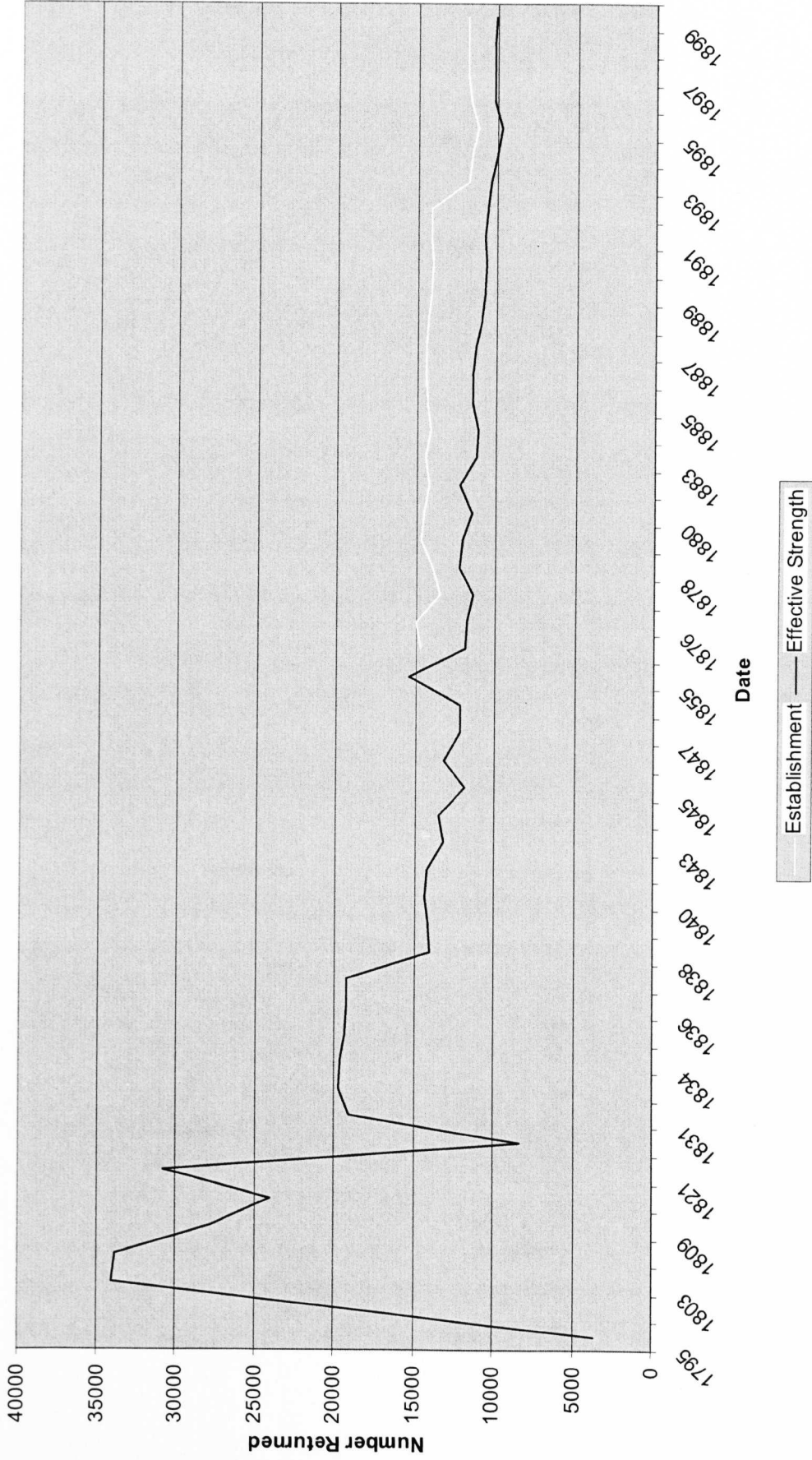
<sup>6</sup> NAS, GD150/2366/81. 'Instructions to corps in event of invasion in the Firth of Forth', C. 1803; and Thompson, C. W. *Records of the Dorset Yeomanry (Queen's Own)* ('Dorset County Chronicle', Dorset, 1894), pp. 18-23.

<sup>7</sup> Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>8</sup> Blackstock, *An Ascendancy Army*, pp. 147-158.

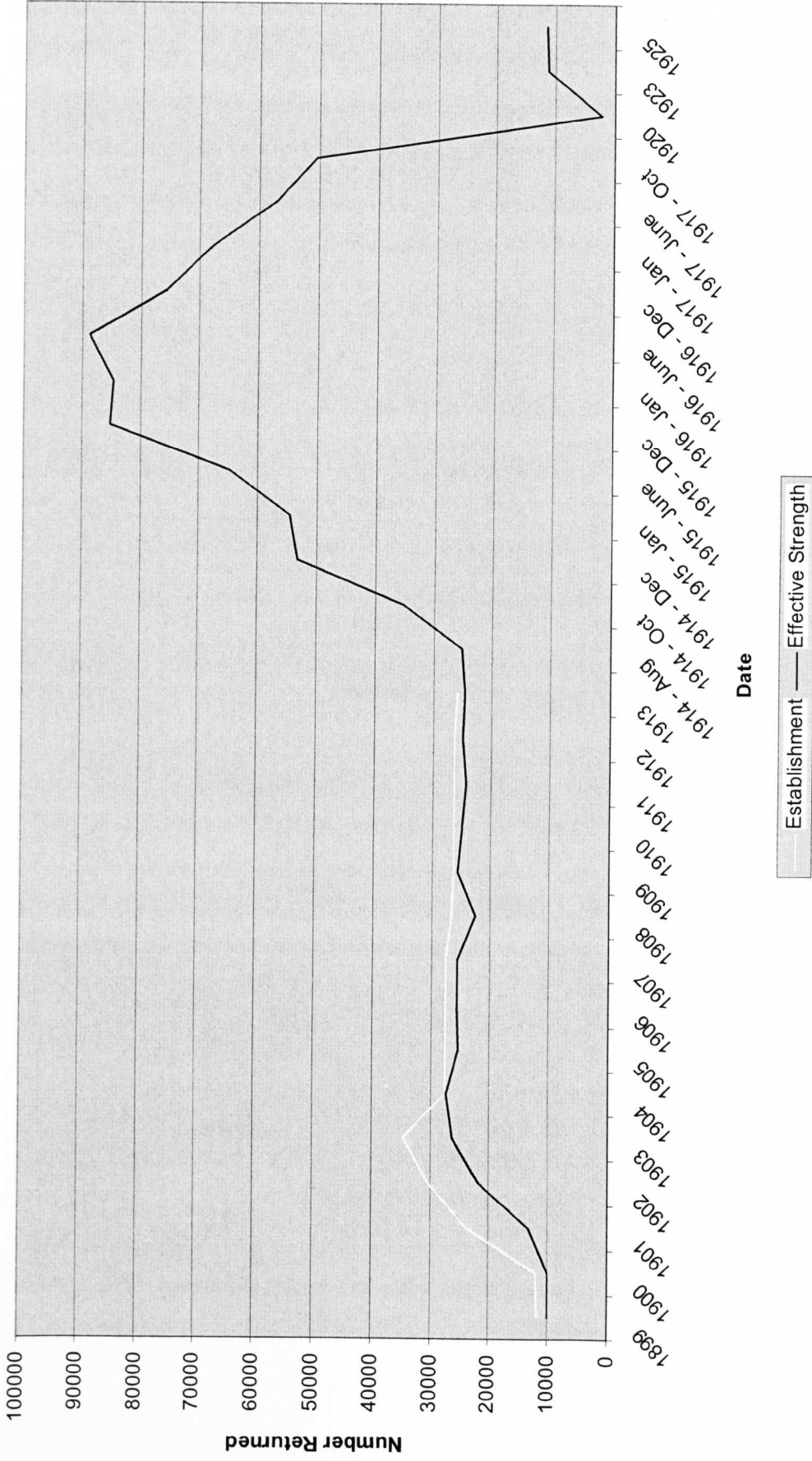
<sup>9</sup> *The Times*, 31/12/1859; and Stuart Jones, E. H. *The Last Invasion of Britain* (Cardiff, 1950), chapters. 2-4.

Chart 1.1: Total Number of Yeomanry Cavalry, 1795-1899



See bibliography for inspection returns.

Chart 1.2: Total Number of Yeomanry Cavalry, 1899-1925



See bibliography for inspection returns.



Not only do they speak volumes on the government's commitment to the force, but they also show the level of public support through participation. For a number of possible reasons the returns do not cover a continuous run through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but for those dates that coincide with significant events it is easy to note how the force tied into government policy and social instability.

Further invasion scares with less frightful outcomes would plague the 1840s and 1850s – they were responsible for resuscitating the Rifle Volunteers – but the Yeomanry also responded to domestic menace and, for the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was of greater importance as a constabulary. As a trend, however, the course plotted by the graph through the 19<sup>th</sup> century could be best described as a gradual decline, especially after 1830. Closer inspection shows that the undulations littering this line are dictated by some of the most significant socio-political events of the 1800s. A decline immediately after the end of the war was hastily reversed after the disaster of 'Peterloo' and the public backlash. The heavy disbandments of 1827 after 10 years of relative stability were rectified after the Swing Riots of 1830. Following further, less dramatic reductions in 1838, the force aided the fledgling police forces in tackling Chartist aggression. And, finally, the fresh invasion scares resulting from French naval development and Napoleon III's hostility also register from the late 1840s. Put simply, the demand for its use and the flow of money and support were clearly connected. Although, as Gee mentions, many assumed insurrection would follow closely behind invasion, the 19<sup>th</sup> century time and again convinced contemporary policy makers that public disorder did not need this encouragement.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, although Great Britain was plagued by disorder and the threat of invasion into the 1850s, there were clearly other pressures that maintained the Yeomanry.

Having passed through the turbulence of war and the most extreme political violence of the early 1830s, the Yeomanry began to look like an anachronism in comparison to the emerging police movement. As chapter four will show, despite filling gaps during the Chartist disturbances, the chances of their being called out to aid the civil power after the late 1850s was ever decreasing. The prolonged existence of the Yeomanry between this date and the turn of the century was then driven and influenced by different pressures. Although some considered it to have inherited the

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<sup>10</sup> Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement*, p. 61.

mantle of constitutional force from the militia, neither this nor defence planning played a large part in its preservation.<sup>11</sup> What did, however, was the social and parliamentary presence of the Yeomanry's officer corps.

Collecting and collating data to identify the political influence of the Yeomanry is not a simple task. Even the most accurate information – extracted from *Dod's Parliamentary Companion* – is not infallible as it does not always list current or past involvement with the auxiliary forces. Nonetheless, by 1843 the force as a whole had at least 14 members serving in both Houses of Parliament, rising to 22 by 1847.<sup>12</sup> The 1850 *Royal Militia and Yeomanry Cavalry Army List* names a parliamentary lobby of 65 men in the House of Commons and the *Dod's* record for two years later speaks of at least 52 across both houses.<sup>13</sup> At such a date it is difficult to provide anything in the way of direct comparisons as the Volunteers were not reformed until the end of the decade. Using the Militia as an example, however, Beckett has shown that the decline in its parliamentary presence between 1832 and 1835 increased the difficulty of its lobby in resisting change to the force.<sup>14</sup> Although the 1850 list shows 58 Militia MPs, as a proportion of the total number of Militia officers, this figure is little more than two per cent. In the Yeomanry this proportion amounted to practically eight per cent of the force's officer corps.<sup>15</sup>

Between 1862 and 1895 Ian Beckett's figures for the Rifle Volunteers provide an equally interesting contrast. Between 1862 and 1874 he shows a total of 24 Volunteers serving within the House of Commons, another 11 MPs being considered as *de facto* Volunteers due to their voting patterns and interests.<sup>16</sup> In the case of the Yeomanry, the *Dod's* list for 1870 still recorded 55 members in the House of Commons and a further 11 in the Lords.<sup>17</sup> Beckett's second Volunteer bracket between 1886 and 1895 shows a total of 18 members of parliament with a further three with interests in the force.<sup>18</sup> By way of further contrast, in 1882 the Yeomanry boasted 39 MPs and 35 Lords, and in 1897 returned a respective 31 and 35 serving in

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<sup>11</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 27/04/1838. Vol. 42, Para. 636-64.

<sup>12</sup> *Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1843* (Whittaker, London, 1843); and *Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1847* (Whittaker, London, 1847).

<sup>13</sup> Sleigh, A. Esq. *The Royal Militia and Yeomanry Cavalry Army List, April 1850* (Reprinted: Naval & Military Press); and *Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1852* (Whittaker, London, 1852).

<sup>14</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 129.

<sup>15</sup> There are 2,639 officers in the 1850 Militia list. A little over two % were M.P.s. The Yeomanry returned 828 officers. Just fewer than eight % were M.P.s.

<sup>16</sup> Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, p. 269.

<sup>17</sup> *Dod's Parliamentary Companion, 1870* (Whittaker, London, 1870).

<sup>18</sup> Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, p. 271.

the force. By this latter date it is also worth noting that a further 18 men equally split between both houses had previously served with the Yeomanry. This relationship was to continue from this date into the following century, returning a combined figure of 64 in 1907, and 63 in 1908 following the Haldane reforms. From 1870 the trend of a previous connection to the Yeomanry was also steadily increasing, with numbers rising from 18 in 1897 to 29 by 1908, likely due to short-term service in South Africa.<sup>19</sup> Although some of these numbers were made up of honorary colonels, their bond to their regiments and their interests was strong, many of them having risen through the commissioned ranks and practically all having served as lieutenant-colonels.

In some regiments the officer corps consistently exhibited strong political links. In Leicestershire this amounted to three MPs in 1849; in West Kent there were six MPs and two peers in the 1880s; and in Wiltshire it would seem that representing the county in parliament led invariably to a Yeomanry commission, or perhaps vice-versa.<sup>20</sup> For all of the force's history, parliamentary representation remained strong and this it would seem was clearly connected to the landed interest of the Yeomanry. As will be shown in chapter two, the domination of the officer corps by the squirearchy, aristocracy, and gentry before the First World War meant that political interaction was likely given the responsibilities that came with rural positions of authority. It is perhaps surprising that in relative terms the Yeomanry outweighed the Militia in parliamentary representation mid-century, and it might even seem logical to connect its reliability with the defence of the parliamentary system and the existing distribution of authority. On the other hand, as chapter two will show, the pageantry and free expenditure that became synonymous with the force simply restricted candidates, whilst not bowing to revolution did not necessarily allude to repressive conservative ideals. Both Militia and Yeomanry maintained substantial rural participation, but it is undeniable that the elevated average social position of the yeoman coupled to the cavalry attraction and the force's visibility in society was popular amongst those wishing to build or maintain a public profile. Rural Britain remained the bastion of Toryism because of the landed interest and the demand for

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<sup>19</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>20</sup> From the 1840s the Wiltshire corps boasted 17 MPs or Lords: Walter Long and son, Lord E. and C. Bruce, Ambrose L. Goddard, William Wyndham, Edmund Antrobus, Visct. Barrington, Thomas F. Grove, Lord Thynne, Baron Estcourt, Charles N. P. Phipps, Marq. of Bath, Edward H. Hulse, Sir John Poynder, Baron Ludlow, John M. F. Fuller. *Dod's Parliamentary Companions*; and Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 189.

agricultural protectionism; the Yeomanry appeared a bastion of Toryism because it lent so heavily on its officers' wallets and so fell predominantly to the same interest group. Above all else, it is easy to say with some authority that the Yeomanry had an influence in parliament out of proportion to its actual strength and, similar to the Militia, this made reductions and adjustments difficult for the government of the day.

Seeming to have its political composition forced upon it raises a number of questions regarding the driving force behind the Yeomanry's membership. From his cell at Ilchester in the wake of the 'Peterloo' Massacre, Henry Hunt painted a particularly disparaging picture of the Yeomanry as a force concerned with, 'keeping up the price of corn, keeping down the price of wages, and at the same time keeping in subjugation the labourers, and silencing their disaffection'.<sup>21</sup> In the case of much of the landed elite this might have seemed an attractive package, but whether such concerns actually motivated Yeomanry membership is difficult to conclude; it is clear, for example, that the Dorset Yeomanry disbanded itself twice – once in 1802 and again in 1814 – on the belief that they were a wartime emergency force and did not wish to appear as though they were protecting their economic interests.<sup>22</sup> Whether the Yeomanry was actually a Tory concern in parliament, however, can to some extent be deduced from the *Dod's* records. Events such as 'Peterloo' fuelled what has become an enduring cliché regarding the institution's Conservatism. *The Satirist* became greatly excited by the prospect of the Yeomanry's total dissolution in 1838 arguing that they were, 'ultra Tories to a man, prepared on every occasion to pounce upon the people'.<sup>23</sup> Five years after this comment it can be shown that, of the eleven Members of Parliament serving in the Yeomanry, a little over 80 per cent were of a Conservative persuasion, one other claiming to be a Whig and another a Reformer.<sup>24</sup> In the aftermath of a particularly politically charged decade these latter examples are rather surprising. A further four years later the Tory figure was more or less the same, but there was a doubling of the Whig representation alongside the same lone Reformer.<sup>25</sup> By 1852 the Conservative figure had fallen to 68 per cent – the remaining 32 per cent being Whigs and Liberals – and by 1870 the Conservative and Liberal interests were effectively evenly split. Although the presence in the House of Lords

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<sup>21</sup> Hunt, H. *Memoirs of Henry Hunt, Esq. Vol. I.* (Dolby, London, 1820), p. 205.

<sup>22</sup> Thompson, *Records of the Dorset Yeomanry*, pp. 50-51 & 101.

<sup>23</sup> *The Satirist*, 18/03/1838.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Shaw Lefevre was the Whig, Edward Royd Rice the Reformer. *Dod's Parliamentary Companion*, 1843.

<sup>25</sup> *Dod's Parliamentary Companion*, 1847 and Appendix 1.

remained mostly politically conservative – ranging from 50 to 73 per cent between 1870 and 1908 – by this latter date the Liberal-Conservative split in the Commons leant only slightly towards the Tories.<sup>26</sup>

Whereas the Rifle Volunteers' parliamentary interest swung from Liberal to Conservative through the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Yeomanry seems to have travelled in the opposite direction.<sup>27</sup> There are, of course, anomalies: some notable Yeomanry politicians, such as Winston Churchill and J. E. B. Seeley, served time in both political parties. However, whilst it will be shown that a Conservative political interest did not necessarily dictate the actions of the force, it is still patently obvious that its political representation was closer to the right, and more so earlier in the century. Nonetheless, even then, it cannot be said to have been ultra Tory. What it perhaps does confirm is the Conservative outlook of a significant portion of the force's officership during the years of constitutional crisis when, as many would claim, it presented an opportunity for class to come up against class.<sup>28</sup> As will be shown in later chapters, however, any clashes between yeomen and the public were less likely to have been acts of class oppression, and more in defence of property, life and stability. That said, it will also be shown that yeomen were not unquestionably loyal. With at least one commanding officer claiming to be a reformer it would at the very least be unfair to document the whole force as an instrument of subjugation and repression; at the same time, it would be naïve to suggest that they were not a tool for defending the political system as it stood. Although Britain upheld freedoms in press, in speech, and in religion, it remained far from a democracy during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The point might also be made that even the Yeomanry's growing Liberal contingent was unlikely to tolerate violent extra-parliamentary pressure for enfranchisement.

It will be shown in the second chapter that Yeomanry officers played a large part in local authority outside of the institution, but it is also clear that they enjoyed significant freedom at the regimental level. Until 1871 local military administration and all correspondence with the Home Office (and, after 1852, the War Office) went through the lords lieutenant. Unsurprisingly the intensity of this workload on top of a lord lieutenant's other duties meant that there was a propensity for delays. The result was significant freedom invested – directly or indirectly – in the counties and in

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<sup>26</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>27</sup> Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, p. 153.

<sup>28</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 10/06/1869. Vol. 196, Para. 1575.

regiments. This had its benefits: freedom of action was important for law enforcement when communications were slow, for example. However, it could also lead to uncertainty and inconsistency. In Uxbridge confusion over how to raise and arm a corps in 1831 descended into a protracted correspondence between the lord lieutenant, Ordnance, and the Home Office before anything got underway. Worse still, once formed, their commandant – who had assumed the rank of major – was demoted to a captaincy when the lord lieutenant discovered that the size of the corps was not sufficient to allow for field ranks. This decision took months to filter through the system which hardly suggests a tight government grip on proceedings or an active and knowledgeable lieutenancy.<sup>29</sup> Although feathers were rarely ruffled in the counties, this security and authority was a long way from the policymakers who could influence the institution at a distance. As a result, just as important to the Yeomanry's stability was its presence in parliament. Essentially it remained in existence because successive central governments approved of its continuation. These sentiments stretched as far as Whig and Liberal administrations that, despite reducing the force at various times, failed to – or did not wish to – extinguish it fully. Although on many occasions it was necessity that forced the hand of government, the success of the Yeomanry's parliamentary lobby also played a part in their maintenance. Earlier in the century the Yeomanry's place within national defence was well cemented. Although reduced at times, retrenchment often coincided with an upsurge of domestic discontent which would force the government to augment the force. Negative voices were far from unknown, but their arguments were largely weakened by a failure to provide a viable alternative to control riot and tumult. William Cobbett had once quoted the political reformer Major John Cartwright who believed, 'the yeomanry corps [to be] the body guard of the borough mongers', and went on to state that, 'now, the body being gone, he could not see why the corps should not be given up'.<sup>30</sup> Whilst the 1832 Reform Act had extended the franchise and removed the rottenest of the boroughs, the majority of Britons were unaffected by the changes and many continued to engage in extra-parliamentary pressure.

From the middle of the century critics had even less success than Cobbett or Hunt. Aggressive detractors were small in number and their propensity to be

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<sup>29</sup> LMA, ACC/1085/F/P/022; 025; 026; and 029. Yeomanry Correspondence between Charles Newdegate and the Duke of Portland, 1831; and Stonham, C. and Freeman, B. *Historical Records of the Middlesex Yeomanry*, pp. 13-16.

<sup>30</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 10/03/1834. Vol. 21, Para. 1372.

outspoken on the subject failed to encourage wider debate and often attracted spirited defence. For the most part yeoman MPs were reactionary, adopting a *laissez faire* attitude to parliamentary intrusion. At times, however, this distance was abandoned when the force was under determined pressure, and became particularly relevant when the entire force's annual permanent duty was threatened. This was not an uncommon event and was at different times blamed on carried-over efficiency or outbreaks of human and animal disease – Cholera or Rinderpest, for example – and led to at least ten abandoned trainings between 1832 and 1879.<sup>31</sup> The *United Service Magazine* was moved to condemn the government's plan not to assemble the Yeomanry in 1860 and the following year, pointing out that it would mean the force had gone three years without being properly embodied. The plea fell on deaf ears.<sup>32</sup> In 1864 the suggestion not to muster the Yeomanry produced fiercer opposition, leading Henry Edwards – Colonel of the 2<sup>nd</sup> West Yorkshire Yeomanry – to state:

It is a question whether the yeomanry cavalry is of any use or no use at all. If it is of no use, disband it at once; but if it is of any value...in aid of the civil power and for other important duties, for heaven's sake do not attempt to disable and discourage it, and impair its efficiency in the way you now propose.<sup>33</sup>

Edwards went on to state that the saving of £64,276 was, 'a mere drop in the ocean, beneath the consideration of the House of Commons under all the circumstances'. This was a sentiment shared by General Jonathan Peel – the brother of the police reformer and Secretary for War in the previous Conservative administration – who noted: 'you call upon us to vote £41,000 for the permanent staff of the Yeomanry, and yet refuse the trifling sum requisite for the six days' training on permanent duty'.<sup>34</sup> Later in Edwards's address he reflected on the instability of Europe and warned against forsaking home defence precautions:

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<sup>31</sup> 1832, 1849, 1851, 1857, 1860, 1861, 1866, 1870, 1879, and 1881. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 188; 'Q. L.' *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, p. 222; and Leary, F. *The Earl of Chester's Regiment of Yeomanry Cavalry*, pp. 238-240.

<sup>32</sup> *United Service Magazine*, No. 378, May 1860, pp. 26-28.

<sup>33</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 03/03/1864. Vol. 173, Para. 1376-81.

<sup>34</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 03/03/1864. Vol. 173, Para. 1376-81; and *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 03/03/1864. Vol. 173, Para. 1386. See also: Eadie, E. 'Peel, Jonathan (1799–1879)' (*ODNB*, OUP, 2004), [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21760>, accessed 10/01/2010]

Why select this time to discourage it, when every power in Europe is engaged in military preparations on a gigantic scale, and trembling at the threatened earthquake of war; we see...every country in the world, prepared at any moment should a blunder occur...when a slight mistake of our Foreign Secretary might plunge the whole of Europe into war.<sup>35</sup>

It is unclear what part his Yeomanry would play in this scenario, but Edwards's alarmist warnings were not met with laughter or opposition. Instead he was told the saving was aimed at recouping costs for the war in New Zealand.<sup>36</sup> Refusing to believe, as one circular had stated, that the Yeomanry was so efficient on its last inspection that it need not come out in the present year, the decision was overturned by parliamentary agitation.<sup>37</sup> *Punch* characteristically assumed darker forces were at work and reported that a party of Yeomanry had visited Palmerston and demanded that they be allowed their permanent duty. Overcome by the threatening yeomen, he had subsequently given way by fabricating a story that good news from the war had meant he could, 'spend part of the New Zealand vote on the bumpkin chivalry'.<sup>38</sup> It seems fair to suppose that a combination of personal and parliamentary lobbying was responsible for their success on this occasion.

Those who directly attacked the Yeomanry were rarely allowed to do so without opposition and it took a concerted effort change conditions. What is more, from the 1840s this change was rarely dramatic. Whereas the Rifle Volunteers only took full advantage of their parliamentary assets from the late 1870s, the Yeomanry was well versed in defending its interests.<sup>39</sup> Those who did repeatedly criticise the force often found themselves under attack. In one such example in the late 1860s, Sir Henry Hoare, Bt. – whose opposition was once described as his 'favourite aversion' – called for the Yeomanry's complete disbandment. He was challenged by Henry Barnett, who suggested that his spiteful attitude was associated with the lack of progress he had once made in the force. Such petty accusations of jealousy or resentment were easy to make given the status upheld by the Yeomanry in local society and in parliament; even more so given that Hoare's support appeared so

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<sup>35</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 03/03/1864. Vol. 173, Para. 1376-81.

<sup>36</sup> See Palmerston's comments. *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 03/03/1864. Vol. 173, Para. 1387.

<sup>37</sup> The vote appears to have been won by a majority of one. *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 03/03/1864. Vol. 173, Para. 1381 & 88.

<sup>38</sup> *Punch*. 26/03/1864.

<sup>39</sup> Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, p. 150.



limited. The comments came during a debate concerning the annual vote, one which later passed with a majority of more than 80 per cent.<sup>40</sup>

What these arguments ignore, however, are the glaring anomalies of 1827 and 1838: the two occasions that the Yeomanry was dramatically reduced through government sanction. The first of these instances was undertaken as an economy measure and was directly related to the corps that had not been called out in aid of the civil power in the previous ten years.<sup>41</sup> Having been left in those districts that might expect the most frequent and severe popular uprisings – mostly the midland and northern industrial towns – the government retrenched more than £92,000.<sup>42</sup> The second round of reductions in 1838 was said to be encouraged by the very same ideals, though in hindsight the saving appears negligible by comparison. Recuperating a little over £22,000 seems overly parsimonious, and this sentiment was not lost on serving yeomen. Again told it was to be a cost saving measure – this time directed towards independent troops – it was also hinted that those corps to be saved were in districts without stations of regular soldiers.<sup>43</sup>

There were key political similarities between both cases. In 1827 the force was reduced by the weak and centrist Tory government of George Canning. Formed from the moderate wing of the party, he had ostracised powerful Conservatives such as the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel over personal and policy issues. As a result the ministry had become reliant on a contingent of Whigs under the Marquess of Lansdowne who saw it as, ‘a government actuated by liberal and enlightened principles’.<sup>44</sup> Ironically, grass-roots Conservative anger over Canning’s elevation nearly led to the calling out of the Yeomanry in Manchester, but this does not seem to have enamoured him to their cause.<sup>45</sup> Though it is effectively impossible to conclude absolutely that Canning or the Whig elements of the coalition had deliberately pursued the reduction of the Yeomanry, it was under his ministry in orchestration with the Whigs that the reductions took place.

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<sup>40</sup> Hoare was M.P. for Chelsea, Barnett the MP for Woodstock. *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 10/06/1869. Vol. 196, Para. 1576; and 09/06/1870. Vol. 201, Para. 183.

<sup>41</sup> *The Times*, 06/12/1827.

<sup>42</sup> *BPP*: 67, 1834: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1833.

<sup>43</sup> *BPP*: 448, 1837-38: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1837; *BPP*: 364, 1839: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1838; and *The Times*, 14/04/1838.

<sup>44</sup> Beales, D. ‘Canning, George (1770–1827)’ (*ODNB*, OUP, 2004), [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21760>, accessed 11/05/2011].

<sup>45</sup> *The Times*, 14/05/1827.

The later reductions were undertaken by Viscount Melbourne's Whig administration in 1838 and cut away a little over 5,000 yeomen and 80 troops.<sup>46</sup> The immediate reaction by those in parliament of Conservative persuasion was that the move had been politically motivated, with the Earl of Winchilsea particularly vocal on the issue.<sup>47</sup> However, such political feeling ran even higher outside of parliament. Lord Sondes, Major Commandant of the Norfolk Yeomanry, resigned his apparently safe command in reaction to the reductions that had taken place in Kent.<sup>48</sup> Unusually, Sondes was also a Captain in the West Kent Yeomanry and having witnessed the government's reduction of that corps, he was persuaded to take pre-emptive action in Norfolk. He stated his willingness to 'prove [his] loyal attachment to the throne...but [he would] not as an independent man, subject [himself] to the capricious and uncertain conduct of the present administration'. In what appeared a direct attack on the Whig ministry, he advised the men of his corps to disband themselves rather than wait for dismissal.<sup>49</sup> In parliament Sondes was apologetic in light of accusations that his political feeling rendered him unfit for command, stating that his retirement had been forced upon him by the obstacles thrown in his way by the government.<sup>50</sup> In private, however, he assured his successor that, 'the Whigs will let you down, as they did Lord Winchilsea [of the West Kent Yeomanry], when they want to make up their budget, showing a saving in the Army estimate'.<sup>51</sup> This they did in 1849 when, along with the Andover, Sussex, Surrey, Lincolnshire North, Towcester, Ilminster, two Hertfordshire, and one Suffolk corps, they were disbanded.<sup>52</sup>

It is impossible to confirm whether a political game was played at the expense of Lord Sondes by delaying the demise of the Norfolk Yeomanry, but he was ultimately correct in his predictions. Joseph Hume concluded in parliament that Sondes's actions had proved the Yeomanry to be partisan, but this was far from the only allegation of such an outlook.<sup>53</sup> Extra-parliamentary exhibitions of political

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<sup>46</sup> Wingfield, Colonel *Historical Record of the Shropshire Yeomanry Cavalry – From its Formation in 1795, up to the Year 1887* (Adnitt & Naunton, Shrewsbury, 1888), p. 57.

<sup>47</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, 07/05/1838. Vol. 42, Para. 944.

<sup>48</sup> Harvey, *Records of the Norfolk Yeomanry Cavalry from 1780 to 1908* (Jarrold, London, 1908), p. 269.

<sup>49</sup> Letter: open letter from Lord Sondes to the Norfolk corps of Yeomanry Cavalry. Cited in *ibid*, pp. 269-270.

<sup>50</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, 07/05/1838. Vol. 42, Para. 949.

<sup>51</sup> Loftus, C. *My Life from 1815 to 1849, Vol. II*. (Hurst and Blackett, London, 1877), p. 233.

<sup>52</sup> It is assumed that all counties received the same circular and that their disappearance between 1847 and 1855 is related.

<sup>53</sup> MP for Kilkenny. *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 27/04/1838. Vol. 42, Para. 636.

sympathy were far from exceptional. During the General Election of 1832, for example, Lord Brudenell rode into Wellingborough at the head of a significant number of his Yeomanry out of uniform. Marching with a band and flying Conservative colours, they surrounded the hustings of their candidate to protect him from an expected violent reception.<sup>54</sup> During the same election, in Warwickshire an alarmed Tory candidate and magistrate was said to have called for the Yeomanry, significantly escalating tensions in the town.<sup>55</sup> Six years later, William Gillon, MP for Falkirk, complained that the Ayrshire Yeomanry had galloped into the town of Kilwinning during the county election and, after creating some great terror, proceeded to be, 'employed as a species of canvassing committee for the Tory candidates'.<sup>56</sup> Though the attack was largely brushed aside, Captain Robert Hunter felt compelled to write to *The Standard* claiming that, despite being poorly treated by the crowd, they had not reacted to defend or act in the interests of any one party. He also stated, 'we have men of all parties. One of the officers with me in Kilwinning was the seconder of the Liberal candidate on the nomination day, and several of the men had voted for him that morning.' It was, nonetheless, Conservative voters and Lord Kelburne who had been the cause for their calling out, having been, 'grossly insulted by being spat upon and otherwise abused'.<sup>57</sup> During similar circumstances in 1841, *The Satirist* noted that, 'the Tories have introduced a new feature to electioneering...[having] brought a quantity of the Yeomanry to protect them, or rather to injure the liberal electors', and in 1852 an anonymous contributor to *The Times* referred to the Yeomanry as an 'electioneering influence'.<sup>58</sup> In the General Election of the same year, the Royal 1<sup>st</sup> Devon Yeomanry erected the hustings of their Captain, Thomas Acland. Standing for the North Devon seat – a part of the country accustomed to political violence – they were prepared for a hostile reception.<sup>59</sup>

It seems that some Tory candidates did use their Yeomanry connections to ensure security during elections, which in turn raises alarming constitutional questions. If the Yeomanry was politically partisan it could prove to be a great asset in securing election. The frequent use of the force during the 1830s against reform

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<sup>54</sup> Thomas, D. *Cardigan – The Hero of Balaclava* (Routledge, London, 1974), pp. 33-34.

<sup>55</sup> TNA, HO 52/20/26 (Folio 73-74). Letter: John Greene (Chairman, Bank of Birmingham) to Home Secretary, 16/12/1832.

<sup>56</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 03/04/1838. Vol. 42, Para. 382-383.

<sup>57</sup> Cooper, *A History of the Ayrshire Yeomanry Cavalry*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>58</sup> *The Satirist*, 04/07/1841; and *The Times*, 14/07/1852.

<sup>59</sup> *The Times*, 24/01/1852.

rioters only adds weight to this argument. Nonetheless, it must be noted that any vanquished candidate, Whig or otherwise, was unlikely to tolerate such patently unconstitutional conduct. Further to this, it has already been shown that parliamentary Whigs and even Reformers had growing influence within Yeomanry circles and in at least one case there had been no pressure for yeomen themselves to vote Tory. Just as interesting, then, is the Earl of Fitz-Hardinge case in 1847 when he actively encouraged his tenantry to vote against a Yeomanry captain – his brother – showing that a landlord did not need the authority of officership to influence the habits of voters.<sup>60</sup> Although the Yeomanry were out alongside special constables in North Somerset as late as the General Election of 1885, in reality its use must predominantly be seen as a preventative measure in unstable districts; a tool to protect the standing constitution and political structures, rather than a partisan instrument.<sup>61</sup> Although it does not excuse the dangerous interaction of political and policing powers, where they were used as labour or security by candidates in no case do they appear to have directly pressured voters. This did, however, make it an easy target. Perhaps Conservative in its role in defending the political system, this did not necessarily mean that its views were influenced by party politics of that persuasion. Furthermore, though it is probable that some yeomen were susceptible to the pressures of deference from officers before secret balloting was introduced in the 1870s, they were no more so than otherwise free tenants with political landlords.

Although there was occasional spontaneity in the raising of Yeomanry matters in parliament, the most significant debates were triggered by the annual vote for army expenditure. In the spring of every year these debates would flourish with hackneyed arguments, only to die just as quickly. In summing up the politicisation of the issue in 1885, the Marquess of Hartington stated, ‘for many years past this vote had been the chief object of attack from the economical party’, suggesting that the Yeomanry could and did cause divisions by simple party politics.<sup>62</sup> As such, in light of the apparent political desire to reduce the force at various times, it is worth discussing its apparent value. Of all the arguments levelled against keeping up the force, expense was always the most powerful. Politics and efficiency aside, the only real damage the force could inflict was on national finance. Amongst the expenses rendered by corps were the

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<sup>60</sup> Quin, *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Gloucestershire and Monmouth*, pp. 161-170.

<sup>61</sup> *Western Mail*, 10/12/1885.

<sup>62</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 07/05/1885, Vol. 297, Para. 1941.

charges against the permanent staff and adjutant; the contingent and clothing allowance for efficient men; compensation for losses and injury to animals and men; pay for annual training; and pay for time in aid of the civil power. Establishing what equates to a 'cheap' force, however, is surprisingly difficult as it was numbers and not allowances that were cut in most reductions. Nonetheless there are a number of comparisons that can be made.

In 1838 the Duke of Wellington noted with exasperation in the House of Lords that, as Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, he had not been consulted regarding the reduction of the county's Yeomanry. Eight years earlier the Duke had supported the proposals to re-establish the corps after its disbandment in the 1820s, and the following year had called on their services during trouble on his estate.<sup>63</sup> It is clear that Wellington intended to defend their interests and estimated that their costs did not exceed £2,000. As he pointed out, the Special Commission sent to deal with the aftermath of the Bristol Riots had cost 30 times that price.<sup>64</sup> Before the reinstatement of the Volunteers in 1859, however, the only real comparisons to be made were with regular cavalry and the militia. In the first respect, Colonel George Reid noted in 1850 that, 'regarding the question of expense, it must be admitted that the yeomanry corps was the cheapest description of force the State could maintain'. He then went on to calculate that 13,500 yeomen called out for permanent duty would cost no more than £81,000, or £6 per man; for comparison he showed the costs of a regular cavalry regiment of 400 men (of which perhaps 250 might be considered effective mounted men) to be £17,777, or more than £44 per man (or more than £71 for the reduced figure).<sup>65</sup> In a less quantitative exchange in 1869, the Liberal Edward Cardwell came to the same conclusions, seeing the vote as eminently reasonable and stating that, 'man for man, [it] was not large as compared with the Regular Cavalry'.<sup>66</sup> But this, perhaps, raises a problem: much cheaper than the regular cavalry it was, but its duties and availability could not have been more different. Between 1815 and 1859 the only other force capable of offering a comparison was the Militia, though the costs per man remain difficult to pin down due to the varied number of regiments embodied. That aside, in an attempt to do just that between 1869 and 1870, *The Quarterly Review*

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<sup>63</sup> Freeman, *Historical Records of the Hampshire Carabiniers Yeomanry*; and *Hampshire Advertiser*, 17/12/1831.

<sup>64</sup> In 1837 the cost of all the Hampshire corps was just under £2,300. *Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, 03/04/1838. Vol. 42, Para. 350; and *BPP*: 448, 1837-38: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1837.

<sup>65</sup> M.P. for Windsor. *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 26/07/1850. Vol. 113, Para. 382-383.

<sup>66</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 10/06/1869. Vol. 196, Para. 1577.

estimated that this amounted to £11 for effective Militiamen.<sup>67</sup> Nonetheless, given that it was disembodied at different times and recruited in a quite separate fashion, it suffers the same flaws as comparisons with the regular forces.

Ignoring the suitability of these comparisons, the Yeomanry can be made to appear reasonable in its costs. It was largely accepted, and repeatedly reiterated by its officers, that much of what was spent on the force came from private funds. In a direct monetary comparison to the Volunteers, however, this value was not immediately clear. Shortly before the introduction of government grants to the Rifle Volunteers, John Lewis complained that the Yeomanry cost £6 5s a man, whilst the Volunteers cost barely 16s per head. However, a more telling comparison was made in the 1880s showing that Rifle Volunteer costs had dramatically increased to £1.13s.7d. In response to the earlier observation Major Henry Edwards factored in the additional running costs of mounted soldiering and the amount that was expended privately, making it clear that the public purse was on the favourable side of the equation. Put simply, though the Yeomanry still greatly exceeded Volunteer costs man-for-man at £6.7s.5d, this had changed little; on the contrary, by these calculations the cost of a Volunteer had more than doubled.<sup>68</sup> Although the Yeomanry had a reputation for expensive uniform, average running costs still surpassed government funds and the idea of transferring more of the burden to regiments attracted little support. Officers interviewed by the Lawrenson Committee in 1861 threatened that a change of this sort would lead to an exodus and it would be difficult to bring these social and occupational groups back to military service.<sup>69</sup> As a result, Viscount Folkestone attempted to break down the combined expenditure in 1883 by estimating regimental expenditure against the government vote. Using the 1882 figure of £69,000 voted for 14,458 men, he calculated that most other ranks would be out of pocket by £2-£5 during camp and so, on average, the men collectively spent approximately £49,000 over their pay. Officers naturally paid more, and taking a low average of £20 for each of the 625 effectives he came to the sum of £12,500. Combined, these figures came to £61,500, only £7,500 shy of the government vote that year. Though others disagreed, it was hard to deny that the course of duty could be expensive and cost more than the

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<sup>67</sup> *The Quarterly Review*. Vol. 127 (John Murray, London, 1869), p. 241.

<sup>68</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 03/03/1862. Vol. 165, Para. 982 & 983 and TNA, WO 32/7237.

<sup>69</sup> *BPP*: 2817, 1861: Lawrenson Committee on the Present Organization and Establishment of the Yeomanry Force.

government provided.<sup>70</sup> Though a general cost comparison was made in 1875 with the Duke of Manchester's Huntingdonshire Light Horse Volunteers – run at a seemingly cheap £2 per man – it soon came to light that this was an unabashed 'class corps'. Predominantly formed from gentlemen, many travelled up to 100 miles to be with the regiment. The weaknesses of this arrangement need not be stated, but it is worth noting that the corps was under the Volunteer banner due to Lord Herbert's (Secretary of State for War) veto on the raising of new Yeomanry, most likely due to Gladstone's insistence that central expenditure be reduced.<sup>71</sup>

Although outwardly cordial, the relations between the Volunteers and the Yeomanry appear more distant than might be assumed, with the latter certainly seeing themselves as the more senior and separate. When asked whether the Yeomanry should serve under the same conditions, Earl Dudley arrogantly stated, 'the Volunteers, no doubt, have come forward throughout the country, and they are a very efficient body of men, no doubt, but the Yeomanry do not look upon themselves in the same light'.<sup>72</sup> Serving under different conditions with different responsibilities, the unbroken existence of the Yeomanry and its service in aid of the civil power led many to see the force as part of the regular defences of the country.<sup>73</sup> Any increase in personal expense was likely to push other ranks out given the costs in time and money they had already invested. Personal finance was not necessarily an issue for officers, but a desire for recognition of their services and sacrifices meant that they were unlikely to accept a reduction or resort to the Volunteer subscription model.

Apart from static expenditure, there were also unpredictable Yeomanry costs defrayed by the government. For example, in 1831 the government compensated for injuries to five men and one horse sustained during rioting at Sherborne in Dorset.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, between 1865 and 1871 the authorities compensated eight men of the Staffordshire Yeomanry for injuries to horses or themselves in the course of training

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<sup>70</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 24/06/1883. Vol. 279, Para. 862-863.

<sup>71</sup> *BPP*: C.1352, 1875: Stanley Committee on Certain Questions that have Arisen with Respect to the Yeomanry Cavalry, p. 229; and Matthew, H. C. G. 'Herbert, Sidney, first Baron Herbert of Lea (1810–1861)' (*ODNB*, OUP, 2009), [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13047>, accessed 26/03/2010].

<sup>72</sup> Lawrenson Committee, 1861, p. 14.

<sup>73</sup> Yeomen had to come out in aid of the civil power, to perform escort duties, and hold himself and a horse ready in case of invasion; the Volunteer did not have to leave his home even for a day. *Ibid*, p. 6 & 9.

<sup>74</sup> This amounted to £25 8s. DHC, D/Doy/A3/4/1. Letter: Frampton to Secretary of State for War, 23/11/1831 and reply: 27/12/1831.

and other duties.<sup>75</sup> Still, despite Earl Grosvenor's 1817 claim that the Yeomanry was a, 'cheap defence of nations', the cost of service in aid of the civil power was amongst the most common grievances.<sup>76</sup> Primarily this stemmed from the attitude that regular soldiers were not only more efficient, but came at no extra expense to the taxpayer. However, as Beckett has shown, despite a near 46 per cent rise in expenditure between 1816 and 1821, the additional sum incurred through constabulary service was small. Indeed, during 1819 this figure amounted to only 7 per cent of that year's total.<sup>77</sup> In reality the cheapness of the Yeomanry came from its size: as it remained small before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, its outright cost was always small, regardless of man-for-man comparisons. As a result, attempting to save the moderate outlay was typically more trouble than it was worth.

Apart from the cost-saving reductions of 1827 and 1838, there was no focused scrutiny of the Yeomanry until the 1860s. There had been changes to command and control before then: administered by the Home Office through lords lieutenant since it was raised, from 1852 it was transferred to the War Office, and from 1854 shared an Inspector-General with the Militia. In 1868 all three branches of the Auxiliaries were brought under the Inspector-General Reserve-Forces, and in 1870 were attached to General Officers Commanding districts. The powers of lords lieutenant – such as signing commissions and calling out the force – were transferred to the crown in the following year, and during the South African War the Yeomanry even attached an officer to the Inspector-General to help with reorganisation.<sup>78</sup> Nonetheless, these changes went mostly unnoticed on the regimental level and, at least before the turn of the century, corps continued to exist with significant freedom from the centre. More significant, however, were changes to organisation. As governments changed so too did policy and commitments, though one concern was always present: the budget. The *laissez-faire* attitude of mid-Victorian governments' restricted state intervention at all levels, with spending never exceeding 16 per cent of gross national product between 1831 and 1900. Apart from debt interest in the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the largest single outgoing was military expenditure, which continued to rise after the Crimean

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<sup>75</sup> Compensation ranged from £10-£20 a case. SRO, D1300/2/1. Copy out-letter book, 1857-1881; and D5982/2/10. Correspondence regarding compensation for dead and injured horses, 1844-1853.

<sup>76</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, 16/06/1817. Vol. 36, Para. 990.

<sup>77</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 133.

<sup>78</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Le Roy Lewis. *BPP*: Cd. 2064, 1904: Norfolk Commission on the Militia and Volunteers, Appendix XXXI, pp. 62-65.



War.<sup>79</sup> As will be shown in the fifth chapter, penny-pinching from the Yeomanry proved counterproductive in the late 1820s and 1830s. The ill-timed reductions in both decades affected the means of responding to rapidly escalating violent events and this had, to some extent, vindicated the existence of the Yeomanry. Nonetheless, as police forces developed, demand declined. It might be assumed that savings were easy to find with a seemingly redundant force like the Yeomanry, but British governments did not immediately look to disbandment. Instead a series of committees and commissions assessed the state and role of the Yeomanry in 1861, 1875, and 1892 with the intention of providing government with adequate ammunition for restructuring or dissolution.

The first of these committees submitted its Liberal sponsored report to parliament in May 1861. Better known as the Lawrenson Committee, its purpose as outlined by its full title was to attempt to gain a clear and up to date account of the state of the force.<sup>80</sup> Billed as a committee to *Inquire into the Present Organisation and Establishment of the Yeomanry Force* it showed, if nothing else, the government's ignorance of the workings and efficiency of the institution. Its real purpose, however, had been laid out in two letters by Lord Herbert, the Secretary of State for War, which asked the committee to find avenues for reduction in the cost of the Yeomanry as well as to restructure the force so that it was more suited to the existing circumstances. As an aside, it was also asked that the committee assess the comparative position of the recently formed mounted Volunteers.<sup>81</sup> Although it is not mentioned in the document, it is very likely that both questions were spurred by the rise of the Rifle Volunteer movement in 1859 and its relatively low cost, both of which raised significant questions of the Yeomanry's role. The report itself attempted to lay down the minimum and maximum size of independent troops, squadrons, corps, and regiments and outlined the allowances in permanent staff for each. It made recommendations against the increasingly common hiring of horses and the inclination of some to equip farm servants for the Yeomanry rather than themselves or family members. It assessed the annual allowances and concluded that, despite heavy spending in excess of the government provision, in many cases the allowance would

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<sup>79</sup> Peacock, A. T. & Wiseman, J. *The Growth of Public Expenditure in the United Kingdom* (PUP, 1961), pp. 37-38.

<sup>80</sup> Major-General Lawrenson had been in command of the cavalry brigade at Aldershot. *The Times*, 10/08/1859.

<sup>81</sup> Lawrenson Committee, 1861, p. 3.

have sufficed. The most controversial suggestion made, however, was regarding officers' pay. To this the committee recommended a reduction so that officers would be remunerated at the same level of NCOs and other ranks when on duty: 7s a day (although they would receive regular officer pay if called out in aid of the civil power or invasion). The overall saving envisaged was a fairly paltry £13,000, but perhaps most interestingly of all it was stated by the committee that, 'we have been informed that great difficulties at present exist in enforcing by process of law the various rules and orders for the government of Yeomanry corps...[we therefore recommend that] one uniform code of rules...be framed for the government of all the Yeomanry in the Kingdom'.<sup>82</sup>

The final comment was aimed at whipping the institution into uniformity, but the committee's report achieved little. The recommendations regarding minimum size, structure and staff allowances were not adopted, leaving its idiosyncrasies in place.<sup>83</sup> The projected figures had also been subjected to an increase in pay to adjutants and permanent staff, which further reduced the money-saving nature of the document.<sup>84</sup> In fact, the only suggestion of the committee that remained binding – the reduction of officers' pay – nearly brought the force down entirely. As Major Henry Edwards, a Yeomanry officer and MP, reported to the House of Commons this was, 'not so much...a matter of £. s. d., but because (as the natural inference) their services were undervalued by the Government, and the paltry saving to the country in last year's Estimates of £3,500 per annum did not warrant such a step'.<sup>85</sup> Although a significant proportion of those interviewed by the committee had effectively stated that they never saw their pay – it typically going straight into a separate fund – the shifting of the economic burden on to officers was seen as a failure to appreciate their sacrifices. This initiated a self-defence response in the form of a meeting of 16 field officers on the issue.<sup>86</sup> In a separate meeting on Monday 10 June the turnout was far higher and the impact much greater. In a demonstration of defiance against the proposals, the Earl of Dudley gathered between 150 and 200 noblemen and gentlemen, including the Earls Harewood, Powis, Warwick, Malden, Verulam, Fitzwilliam, Dalkeith, Vane, Manners, and Cork amongst a host of other senior peers, notable politicians, and

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 6

<sup>83</sup> 'Q. L.' *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, p. 71.

<sup>84</sup> Lawrenson Committee, 1861, p. 16.

<sup>85</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 03/03/1862. Vol. 165, Para. 956.

<sup>86</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 07/06/1861. Vol. 16, Para. 812.

military men. This seems to have been the first occasion on which Yeomanry officers collected together and acted as a single lobby and the results were impressive. Apart from ostracising the three yeomen involved in the committee – Colonel the Marquis of Ailesbury, Colonel the Viscount Eversley, and Lieutenant-Colonel Deedes – they agreed to join as a body in parliament and, ‘force them to return to the old system’.<sup>87</sup> This was fully achieved, with even the adjustment to pay reversed in 1862 due to the need for a further Act of Parliament to repeal the Yeomanry’s 1804 Act (44 Geo. III, Cap. 54).<sup>88</sup> Again, though the Rifle Volunteers struggled to capitalise on their political power before the mid-1870s, the Yeomanry ably threw its weight around from the middle of the century when its parliamentary lobby continued to grow across both parties.

Thirteen years later the institution was faced with the same process, though the enquiry produced a much weightier tome. The 1875 committee was sponsored by Disraeli’s Conservative government and adopted a more ambiguous title that promised to, ‘*enquire into certain questions that have arisen with respect to the Yeomanry Cavalry*’; it was, however, ominously headed by the Financial Secretary to the War Office and was given the brief not to exceed the previous year’s estimates.<sup>89</sup> Having undertaken small yet sensible changes in 1870 under Cardwell’s tenure as Secretary of State for War for the Liberals, it would seem that scrutiny had unveiled some undesirable qualities in the force. Once more, however, the process was in part driven by financial concerns.<sup>90</sup> Within these earlier changes (effective from 31 March 1871) the number of regiments was set at 36; independent troops and corps below four troops were abolished – either absorbed, converted to mounted Volunteers (outside the Yeomanry vote) or disbanded – minimum establishments were set; basic training and drill requirements were laid down; and the force came under the command of the newly arranged military districts.<sup>91</sup> In the parliamentary debates there is evidence that Cardwell hoped to adapt the Yeomanry into a Mounted Rifles force based on the model of the Hampshire Carabiners. Nonetheless, it failed in the face of continued ‘social’ opposition and attracted the remark of one M.P. that, ‘so long as

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<sup>87</sup> *The Times*, 12/06/1861.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Q. L.’ *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, pp. 224 & 229.

<sup>89</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, p. IV.

<sup>90</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 09/06/1870, Vol. 201, Para. 1839.

<sup>91</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 18/03/1870, Vol. 200, Para. 201-2 & 09/06/1870, Vol. 201, Para. 1835-41; and WRO, CR1886/Box636. ‘Yeomanry Letters’, un-catalogued (Yeomanry Reorganisation Memorandum.)

the cavalry system of England...[continues] to be what it was at present the Yeomanry would ape it'.<sup>92</sup> Apart from a slightly smaller and steadier footing, however, the Yeomanry did not appear to have been altered a great deal in 1871. In fact, in many respects the changes might be considered expedient to efficiency, now held to a minimum of eight squad and four troop drills and a three year engagement. Though not as far reaching as the changes to the Volunteers, in the eyes of many yeomen it highlighted Cardwell's failure to recognise their sacrifices and led in one case to the resignation of a lieutenant-colonel. For the average private in the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry, it also meant doubling the number of troop drills.<sup>93</sup> To the disappointment of more yeomen, the 1875 committee suggested further adjustments despite promising not to make any, 'sweeping change in the character and constitution of the force'.

In its recommendations, the Stanley Committee suggested striking off regiments that had been below 200 effective men for two consecutive years; encouraged musketry; encouraged training for officers and permanent sergeants; and once more pushed for the end of horse hiring at camp.<sup>94</sup> As in 1861, however, many of these suggestions went unheeded. The percentage of hired horses continued to increase and, despite it being laid down in the regulations, by 1892 more than 40 per cent of corps' provided returns below 200 men.<sup>95</sup> Although the regulations were largely ignored, the issues were far from buried in the public or political mind. In November 1891 the Earl of Airlie published an article in *The Nineteenth Century* in which he stated: 'the Yeomanry cannot exist as things are at present with credit to itself or advantage to the country...[however], the force only requires fair treatment to make it a most valuable one'.<sup>96</sup> Airlie was an extremely experienced cavalry officer, later killed at the head of the 12<sup>th</sup> Lancers in South Africa, but from 1889 he was the adjutant of the Hampshire Carabiners.<sup>97</sup> In his article he discussed at length the conflicting opinions regarding the Yeomanry and drew up a number of clear objections, including the want of a suitable role, the want of training, and the lack of

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<sup>92</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 11/04/1871 Vol. 205, Para. 1222-1223.

<sup>93</sup> Earl Dudley. 'Q. L.' *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, p. 75; Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, pp.129-131; and Thompson, *Records of the Dorset Yeomanry*, pp. 139-140.

<sup>94</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 1.

<sup>95</sup> See table 3.2 (chapter three) and *Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, 24/05/1892, Vol. 4, Para. 1648-1649.

<sup>96</sup> *The Nineteenth Century*, No. 177, Nov. 1891, p. 811.

<sup>97</sup> Freeman, *Historical Records of the Hampshire Carabiniers Yeomanry*; and *Daily News*, 14/06/1900.

scope for their use. In particular, though, he focussed upon economy for which he drew parallels with efficiency:

If the Yeomanry is or can be rendered an efficient force, then it is a remarkably cheap one. If it is and must remain inefficient, it is extremely expensive. If the force is worth maintaining, then the self-imposed taxation which largely helps to support it is very valuable and a gift not to be lightly refused; if it is not worth maintaining the money devoted by private persons to help in supporting it would be better spent in some other way.<sup>98</sup>

In essence Airlie urged the nation to focus not on how much the force cost, but what it was worth. Littered with astonishing foresight – amongst other predictions, Airlie foresaw a time when the Yeomanry might be called on for foreign service – the article made suggestions of economic sense. There is no question that these suggestions were the basis of the following year's committee.

The Brownlow Committee of 1892 was the last of the drawn out 19<sup>th</sup> century attempts to place the Yeomanry in a more tolerable financial and military position. Made up of the Earl Brownlow (Under-Secretary of State for War), Major-General Sir Reginald Gipps (Military Secretary), Colonel Duncombe (Inspector of Yeomanry), and Colonel Grove (of the Adjutant General's department, in charge of mobilisation) it bore one clear difference to those previous in that no yeomen sat on the panel. Driven by the failure of the 1875 committee and War Office meetings from the 1880s, Earl Brownlow stated amongst its key aims finding a way to maintain those regiments below establishment without disbandment.<sup>99</sup> To do this they recommended brigading regiments and adopting the squadron system and, for those counties unable to keep a regiment at or above 140 men, they could exist as a squadron without regimental staff.<sup>100</sup> The reorganisation they called for would largely be approved for introduction in April 1893. However, under the guise of allotting the Yeomanry a place in the

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<sup>98</sup> *The Nineteenth Century*, No. 177, Nov. 1891, p. 799.

<sup>99</sup> In 1881-1882 meetings with Yeomanry officers took place over the expense and role of the force. They came to noting. TNA, WO 32/7237.

<sup>100</sup> Leary, *The Earl of Chester's Regiment of Yeomanry Cavalry*, pp. 201-202.

wider mobilisation scheme they in fact drastically reduced its permanent staff and, in the process of brigading regiments, effectively halved the number of adjutants.<sup>101</sup>

The positive impacts of these reforms should not be ignored – weak regiments were joined in a brigade (regiments effectively becoming the squadron unit) and the money saved was to be reinvested in the encouragement of musketry with an effective increase of £1 to the contingent allowance for those passing as 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class shots in musketry. As an extra incentive, those who failed to achieve this in two consecutive years would be struck off.<sup>102</sup> However, the warning of Henry Campbell-Bannerman (not the Yeomanry’s warmest supporter) that this was the institution’s ‘last chance’ did not win support within their ranks.<sup>103</sup> For the most part the changes were lukewarmly received, though many regiments did embrace the new musketry standards and engaged in the competitive nature of brigade camps.<sup>104</sup> Nonetheless, the impact of halving adjutant numbers soon began to tell in increasing paperwork and the split demands on time, further diluting instruction within regiments. In addition, it was said that squadrons and brigades kept troops away from their headquarters and seriously hindered recruiting due to a lack of local exposure.<sup>105</sup> What might have initially seemed professionalising measures began to take on the appearance of parsimony; a frugality that was seen to work against efficiency.<sup>106</sup> Perhaps equally significant, these changes did little to silence public criticism, something that led Lord Lucus of the Suffolk Hussars to sponsor *The Duke of York’s Own Loyal Suffolk Hussars Gazette* in the summer of 1896, which quickly developed into *The Yeomanry Record* early in the following year.<sup>107</sup> Though it contained copy of general Yeomanry matters, its real purpose was to challenge the attacks of the mainstream press and provide a mouthpiece for the Yeomanry lobby. This it seems to have done with enthusiasm,

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<sup>101</sup> Permanent sergeants would be reduced to one per squadron instead of per troop (230 to 148) and adjutants would drop from 39 to 19 as vacancies were not filled. The combined saving was expected to be around £13,300. *The Times*, 05/01/1893; and 08/03/1893.

<sup>102</sup> Thompson, *Records of the Dorset Yeomanry*, pp. 182-183.

<sup>103</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 11/03/1893. Vol. 9, Para. 1811.

<sup>104</sup> Yeomen could take part in the Volunteer’s Wimbledon meeting from 1883, but scores in the Queen’s Prize were overshadowed by Volunteer efforts. *The Times*, 13/07/1883 and 16/07/1883. The ‘Inter-Yeomanry Challenge Cup’ developed interest, but using the carbine, many did not produce impressive scores. Dorset and Hampshire Yeomanries were first to camp as a brigade – they were already considered the most militarily efficient corps’.

<sup>105</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 15/03/1895. Vol. 31, Para. 1203, and 16/03/1900. Vol. 80, Para. 1113.

<sup>106</sup> ‘Q. L.’ *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, p. 89.

<sup>107</sup> BL, *Duke of York’s Own Loyal Suffolk Hussars Gazette*. Vol. 1, No. 1-7. 06-12/1896; and NAM, *The Yeomanry Record – An Illustrated Paper Devoted Entirely to the Interests of the Yeomanry*. No. 14, August 1897; No. 15, September 1897; & No. 16, October 1897.

though it only lasted into 1898. It is unclear why it was abandoned so quickly (although the lack of subscriptions is a strong possibility), but events soon after altered public opinion without the need for such a public relations exercise.

Over these three committees senior yeomen and representatives of the army and War Office attempted to reach a compromise between expenditure and expectations; all three, however, were aware that they were dealing with a sensitive section of society that did not readily provide for military service. Whilst yeomen battled against entrenched advocates of disbandment, politicians had the unenviable task of dealing with a powerful social lobby and a significant parliamentary presence. It is clear that greater success was achieved when yeomen were dropped from committees and it might well be said that, in 1892, the institution was lucky to have been given their 'last chance' by a Conservative government. The events that followed from the end of 1899, however, were dictated by the demands of the South African War, which not only changed the nature of the force, but also its relationship with the state.

If colonels believed they hardly saw their adjutants throughout the 1890s, the additional pressure of raising and training men for the Boer War compounded this problem. In 1901 another committee – formed almost entirely of senior Yeomanry officers – noted that the brigade adjutant system, 'upon trial at a critical moment, has been found inadequate.'<sup>108</sup> The Harris Committee went on to suggest a reversion to the previous system, seeing no particularly useful results in the brigading of regiments. It also did not commit to an outright expansion of the existing force as was desired by government. Training was lengthened to allow greater time for shooting and riding instruction, but on the whole it was believed that men of the right class were in short supply. Despite an acknowledgement of the willingness of more urban recruits to participate, the committee suggested extending the movement to those counties and areas without regiments or that were not currently recruited in. Above all else, the committee desired a Yeomanry officer at the War Office so, 'that the force would be better understood than it has been in the past'.<sup>109</sup> This they received in the form of Colonel Lucas – the DAAG to the Yeomanry and leading member of the

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<sup>108</sup> Colonel Earl Dundonald was the only regular soldier on the committee. A cavalryman of the 'firepower school', he recommended that the Yeomanry become Mounted Rifles. Stearn, R. T. 'Cochrane, Douglas Mackinnon Baillie Hamilton, twelfth earl of Dundonald (1852–1935)' (*ODNB*, OUP, 2006), [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32472>, accessed 17/06/2007].

<sup>109</sup> *BPP*: Cd. 466, 1901: Harris Committee on the Organization, Arms, and Equipment of the Yeomanry Force, p. 4, 7, 11, & 12.

Yeomanry Committee during the war – who would subsequently follow up the Harris Committee's report with a more detailed account of planning and operations in South Africa.

The impact of the Harris Committee was felt through Army Order 109 of 1901, though the changes were not quite as suggested. This enacted the following:

- a) Removed the word 'cavalry' from the title and made the force 'Imperial Yeomanry', despite the suggestions of the committee.
- b) Abolished the brigade system and reintroduced the full regimental staff.
- c) Settled the establishment at 30 officers and 566 other ranks, inclusive of a permanent staff of one adjutant and five sergeants and a machine gun detachment of one officer and 16 other ranks. A regiment falling below 420 all ranks for two consecutive years was liable for disbandment.
- d) Efficiency was now judged by a minimum of 14 of the 16 days under canvas at camp (no longer billets), six or 12 preliminary drills (the latter for recruits), and a requirement to reach 2<sup>nd</sup> class in musketry.
- e) Introduced forage allowance for permanent duty and squadron drills (1s 6d p/d); introduced a £5 horse allowance for those not provided with a government horse; and paid 3s a day for musketry practice (up to three days) and 6s towards travel to ranges.
- f) Rates of pay for officers were to reflect the regular army whilst other ranks had their pay reduced from 7s a day to 5s 6d.
- g) The contingent allowance was fixed at £3 per efficient man and allowed another £2 per man to bring the force up to the expanded strength (35,000). A further £20 and £30 were allowed for a squadron and regimental store respectively.
- h) Sword exercises were abolished and the Yeomanry received government saddles and arms complete with 100 rounds per yeoman.<sup>110</sup>

Although the Imperial Yeomanry never reached its manpower target, it more than doubled its strength under these conditions until the Haldane reforms.

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<sup>110</sup> 'Q. L.' *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, pp. 165-166; Verdin, Lieutenant- Colonel Sir R. *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry 1898-1967* (Wilmer Bros, Birkenhead, 1971), pp. 14-16; and Harris Committee, 1901.



The final reforms to affect the Yeomanry before the First World War came in the form of R. B. Haldane's Territorial and Reserve Forces Act of 1907. Though as Spiers notes the force appeared potentially useful in light of the 1901 adjustments, it still did not have a staff, a brigade structure, nor an administrative service. Worst of all perhaps, it did not appear to possess a genuine wartime role. For much of its history this had not been hugely important – it had, after all, acted more as a constabulary force and typically expected to face invasion on a local level. Industrialised warfare, however, demanded more from the reserve forces, and not just in the event of invasion. As a result, the Yeomanry presented the ideal nucleus from which the 2<sup>nd</sup> line cavalry might be formed.<sup>111</sup> Thus, three new regiments – the North and South Irish Horse and King Edward's Horse – were apportioned to the Special Reserve due to the political circumstances in Ireland and the unusual composition of the latter regiment (made up as it was from men of the colonies). The remaining 53 Yeomanry regiments were destined to make up 14 mounted brigades as well as the divisional mounted troops for Territorial divisions. However, such prospects were not universally welcomed. In the committee stage of the Bill, Viscount Valentia pushed to have the Yeomanry excluded from its contents on the basis that less time in training would blunt their efficiency and a reduction in pay would lose them men. The great fear was that the class of the Yeomanry would be altered rather than the numbers, which in turn would mean slower mobilisation. Although notoriously hard to bring to the services, the middle-class rank and file was assumed to be of greater intelligence and capable of becoming efficient more quickly on the outbreak of war. While he was not without support, in a tactful response Haldane sidestepped Valentia's proposal. It ultimately failed at the vote to a majority of 207.<sup>112</sup>

Haldane's own opinion of the force seems to have been positive. Seemingly impressed that it largely remained in the hands of country gentlemen, he was also disturbed by the fact that regiments clung to histories and traditions and that powerful men were, 'devotedly attached to them'. As he noted, 'to break with tradition and weld their substance into something quite novel was likely to be a very serious undertaking.'<sup>113</sup> Knowing it was to be a challenge, he realised any alteration would

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<sup>111</sup> Spiers, E. M. *Haldane: An Army Reformer* (EUP, 1980), p. 93.

<sup>112</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 28/05/1907. Vol. 174, Para. 1537-1568; 17/06/1907. Vol. 176, Para. 194-208.

<sup>113</sup> Haldane, R. B. *Richard Burdon Haldane – An Autobiography* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1929), p. 192.

require a comprehensive statute. At least in terms of the Yeomanry, this is what he delivered, though its success was largely explained by its limited impact. On a regimental level the changes were as follows:

- a) In use since the 1901 reforms, 'Imperial' was to be dropped from regimental titles and 'Cavalry' reinstated.
- b) The establishment of officers was changed to 25 instead of 30 and the number of other ranks was set at 449. Provision also was made for a major and second in command to be found amongst the 25 officers.
- c) The force was to be formed into Mounted Brigades.
- d) The pay of a trooper on duty was reduced to 1s 2d per diem, though he now received free rations supplemented by a messing allowance of 1s per diem paid to the regiment. It was argued by some that he was better off as a result given the fact that they were under canvas.
- e) Horses, if necessary, were to be supplied by the County Associations, whilst the horse allowance remained at £5 with the reduction of 6s 8d for each day absent. Passing an equitation test secured a yeoman a further £1.
- f) Annual camp was reduced from 16 to 15 days, with eight days being the minimum to obtain a certificate of efficiency.
- g) Contingent grants were abolished in place of local administration (County Associations).
- h) Terms of enlistment were for four years (unless otherwise decided by County Associations), though discharge could be obtained with three months notice and a £5 fine. No warrant officer or NCO could be older than 55 and no trooper older than 45 was to be enlisted. All ranks were given until 30 June 1908 to volunteer for the conditions.<sup>114</sup>

At the local level there were more profound changes, particularly the new level of bureaucracy introduced between regiments and the War Office: the County Territorial Associations. In the words of one Lanarkshire yeoman, this meant the force was to be, 'slumped in with the volunteers', losing its independence and individuality. The Yeomanry, who recognised and treasured their independence, had only approved of

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<sup>114</sup> 'Q. L.' *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, pp. 174-175; and Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry*, p. 25.

the terms once the elected (non-military) element had been reduced. Nonetheless, some – like the Lanarkshire Yeomanry – still grumbled about not communicating directly with the War Office.<sup>115</sup> On closer inspection it is actually clear that the associations possessed very limited powers, with funding ultimately the responsibility of the War Office and training entirely in their hands. Nonetheless, sitting between the ministry and regiments, the new organisation administered county forces and supplied their equipment and clothing through the use of central grants. Formed from members of county and borough councils, and the commanding officers of the administered units, they were headed by lords lieutenant. The committees also included co-opted members found amongst influential businessmen and employers, who were elected to their positions by the military contingent.<sup>116</sup>

On the whole, despite such a seemingly significant change to organisation, it was to be business as usual for most regiments. Organisation aside, however, it is hard to ignore the volume of correspondence generated for trivial matters; matters that had once not needed such communication. On 8 January 1909, for example, the lieutenant-colonel of the Staffordshire Yeomanry was forced to ask the association whether he could repair some cloaks locally rather than send them to the official supplier; the postage alone, he believed, would cost more than the repairs. As it was, the County Territorial Association appeared to be taking simple decisions out of officers' hands and ignoring the local relationships that had helped to support the institution from its beginnings.<sup>117</sup> In London it would seem that the Yeomanry had an even harder time. In a meeting of the County of London Territorial Association, Colonel F. A. Heygate-Lambert of the Middlesex Hussars voiced his intention to re-house his stables, stores, and HQ, stating that he had found the ideal premises. After being told that the committee could be no more than his 'post office in the matter' (the purchase of buildings being a War Office issue), he was effectively told that he would have to wait his turn as they were still struggling to find a home for the artillery.<sup>118</sup> Similarly, the same Association largely failed the Sharpshooters in the supply of horses. Lieutenant-Colonel Weston Jarvis reported to the committee on 28 November

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<sup>115</sup> Dennis, P. *The Territorial Army*, p. 12; Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 216; and Wood, R. E. *Records of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry 1819-1910* (Privately published, C. 1910), p. 38.

<sup>116</sup> Mitchinson, K. W. *England's Last Hope: The Territorial Force, 1908-1914* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 1-4.

<sup>117</sup> SRO, D1300/2/3. Copy out-letter book, 3. Letter: Lieutenant- Colonel Staffordshire Yeomanry to Secretary Staffordshire Territorial Association, 08/01/1909.

<sup>118</sup> LMA, A/TA/7. County of London Territorial Association committee meeting minutes, 26/03/1909.

1912 that the deficiency had been so bad that year that the regiment had been 40 animals short at the time of training. Most of the horses he had acquired had come from the West Country – Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Dorset – as none of the Yeomanry could get horses in the capital. Perhaps most interesting of all, those horses marked out by the Horse Census for mobilisation were not available in peace. They would thus be completely un-ridden on military duties come the outbreak of war. As Weston-Jarvis noted, this lack of animals made brigade training impossible and, ‘if it was not for the kindness of personal friends commanding cavalry regiments who lend us their horses at Easter and Whitsuntide, it would be perfectly impossible for us Yeomanry CO’s to give our trained men the requisite number of mounted drills’.<sup>119</sup> Whilst this provides a fine example of the relations between professional and auxiliary cavalry regiments, it is hardly inspiring as a measure of the latter’s competence.

In any number of ways Haldane’s reforms appeared ground breaking. Unfortunately, due to the frequent compromises required to see them through parliament, they were flawed in a number of aspects. As chapter six will show, on the eve of war only one Yeomanry regiment wore the ‘Imperial Service’ badge and the combined Imperial Service Sections of the rest of the force were small and widely distributed. Although it is clear that a number of regiments rapidly took their places as divisional cavalry within the BEF and the divisions of the Territorial and New Armies, it is also apparent that it was very difficult to place the remainder of the force. It would be unfair to criticise Haldane for these failures given the conflicting pressures of finance and tradition; in fact, it is undeniable that the reforms placed the force in a position where it could be utilised, far more so than ever before. Nonetheless, certain conditions of Territorial service combined with operational restrictions limited the immediate impact of the Yeomanry’s contribution to the First World War. This was the fault of the framework which the Yeomanry were forced to operate within, but this in itself was partly a product of its resistance and inflexibility.

It is difficult to attempt to outline the change in Yeomanry allowances through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries because those changes were frequent. Similarly, exemptions which had once been attractive eventually became defunct. Although exemption from the Militia Ballot was a statutory relic after 1831, the Horse Tax

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<sup>119</sup> LMA, A/TA/8. County of London Territorial Association committee meeting minutes, 28/11/1912 & 22/07/1913.

remained relevant until 1874 when it was finally repealed. Chapter three will show how significant both were to membership, but their substitution with Jury Exemption is hard to quantify in comparison.<sup>120</sup> The direct recompense received by yeomen also altered considerably over time, with pay giving way to allowances or proficiency rewards as the century progressed. By way of example, in 1908 a private on permanent duty received 1s 2d a day with a 1s messing allowance whereas his 1833 counterpart received 2s a day with 1s 4d for his horse. Nonetheless, the 1908 post-Haldane yeoman might also claim a £5 horse allowance and £1 equitation grant.<sup>121</sup> It was habitually understood that the contingent grant for the Yeomanry was not sufficient to cover running costs, just as it was part of the service for officers to subsidise regimental expenditure. However, beginning in 1901 and completed in 1908, changes provided the means for change and progress.

Personal expenses for other ranks were slashed through accommodation under canvas and the clothing and equipment supplied by the County Associations, whilst the horse allowance provided for those unable to keep an animal. Although a yeoman still might not break even, his service certainly did not cost him what it once had. Furthermore, with the expectation of keeping a horse completely removed, the true urbanite could fit into the ranks. The impact of these changes will be explored in later chapters regarding the rank and file and the officer corps. As an indicator of government relations, however, the reforms of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century provide an interesting story: declining in the 1890s, the force had only been allowed to survive as a shadow of its former self and as a small drain on national finances. The South African War had flipped public opinion and the rapid expansion of the force demanded immediate and focussed government attention. Understandably the findings of the 1892 committee were found to hamper efficiency and were in no way suitable for a force that was now more than double the size. As a result, the increases in spending came with strict caveats and, more importantly, placed them in a genuine position of national defence; even if a mobilisation scheme did not materialise until 1912.<sup>122</sup> Within Haldane's Territorial Force the Yeomanry lost a great deal of its independence and found itself held to account as part of a larger, more organised

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<sup>120</sup> The last Militia ballot failed during the reform upheavals of 1831. It was only wiped from the statute book in 1875. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 131; *Sporting Gazette*, 18/04/1874; and Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 166.

<sup>121</sup> DHC, D/DOY/A/11/3. Dorset Yeomanry Regimental Orders C. 1909.

<sup>122</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 219.

movement. Relieved of a larger part of their expenses by County Territorial Associations, commanding officers also found themselves swamped in new bureaucracy and without the freedoms they had previously enjoyed. Now on a far more capable and organised military footing, the Yeomanry had also largely lost its individuality and some of the socio-political cachet that went with it.

The final and most far-reaching changes to the Yeomanry Cavalry were born in the aftermath of the Great War. As will be shown in the last chapter, the Yeomanry's war experience between 1914 and 1918 was varied. Some did remain mounted – up to half, both on the Middle-Eastern and Western Front – but the others were mostly converted to infantry. Unsurprisingly, the difficulty in placing these men during the conflict led to considerable post-war reflection and inevitable restructuring. This began in earnest in February and March 1920 when Churchill – the Secretary of State for War – called a number of meetings of lords lieutenant, the chairmen of the Territorial Force Associations, and the commanding officers of Yeomanry regiments. It was dictated that, due to financial constraints, only ten would remain mounted out of the 54 regiments of 1914, and that those ten would be the most senior on the Yeomanry list of precedence.<sup>123</sup> In the event of mobilisation, these ten regiments were to form the nucleus of a second cavalry division as well as provide corps cavalry functions. Two other Yeomanry regiments were to supply the signals and Royal Horse Artillery support for this division– the 1<sup>st</sup> County of London and the City of London 'Rough Riders' respectively – in the form of two signals squadrons and two batteries of horse artillery (after amalgamating with the Honourable Artillery Company).<sup>124</sup> The Scottish Horse and Lovat Scouts were both reduced to a single regiment from brigade strength and were to be mounted scouts rather than cavalry.<sup>125</sup>

Largely in line with the General Staff ruling that the proportion of artillery to infantry and cavalry in the Territorial Army had to rise, the options offered were conversion to armoured car companies, field artillery batteries, mountain artillery batteries, or signals units. Churchill at first gave regiments 12 months to decide their fate by selecting an arm to convert to or, if they preferred, to pass out of existence. On 11 March 1920 a subsequent circular issued by the Army Council altered the 12

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<sup>123</sup> This does not include the Special Reserve regiments: North and South Irish Horse and King Edward's Horse. *The Times*, 14/02/1920; and 10/03/1920.

<sup>124</sup> TNA, CAB/24/95. Future Organisation of Territorial Force, p. 3; and *BPP*: Cmd. 2272, 1924: *General Annual Report on the British Army*, 1923, p. 118.

<sup>125</sup> *The Times*, 11/11/1920.

month ruling, allowing regiments to recruit as cavalry for up to two years, during which time they were to effect the process of conversion. By reforming on pre-war lines, it was hoped that historical continuity would attract more interest. Nonetheless, it is clear that the Army Council hoped regiments would be willing to convert immediately to new arms. As such, those regiments choosing to wait it out would not receive adjutants or permanent staff until they made their decision.<sup>126</sup>

Unfortunately, due to a speech given by Churchill on 8 December 1920, this planning was considerably unsettled. Stating that the Northumberland Hussars had attained its full strength, he threatened that any of the ten senior regiments that did not make rapid progress towards completion would be usurped by it and others.<sup>127</sup> As it was number 14 on the seniority list, the regiment had no right to claim a place as cavalry in the new scheme. The gaffe caused significant issues and led to confusion for the three regiments senior to the Northumberland Hussars, all of whom had already converted to other arms.<sup>128</sup> In the end only one solution to the issue was deemed feasible: the cavalry element of the force was expanded to 14 regiments, with the three regiments senior to the Northumberland Hussars converted back to cavalry.<sup>129</sup> The result of this wrangling was uproar amongst those who had already converted. Bitterly disappointed at having missed out, some attacked the flawed precedence table on the basis that it had been incorrect since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>130</sup> Though they were largely correct, attempting to put it right would undoubtedly have been more trouble than it was worth.

The task of reorganising the Yeomanry to fit with the plans of the General Staff and the reconstituted Territorial Army was not an enviable one. With a history of difficulty when it came to reform, it was made all the more complex by the interference of influential individuals and powerful lobbying. Only having a need for a very small number of mounted units it was intended to select as few as ten from the 55 pre-war regiments. The only fair and acceptable way to do this was to rely on the list of precedence. Unfortunately, this list did not necessarily take into account efficiency or war service. The Hampshire Carabiners – acclaimed for its proficiency

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<sup>126</sup> The 11 March memorandum ended the idea of maintaining regiments as Special Reserve. Fellows & Freeman, *Historical Records of the South Nottinghamshire Hussars Yeomanry*, pp. 293-294.

<sup>127</sup> TNA, WO 32/18596. Notes for the SSW on the Yeomanry Deputation to the War Office, 28/02/1921.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Fellows & Freeman, *Historical Records of the South Nottinghamshire Hussars Yeomanry*, p. 296.

<sup>130</sup> See Appendix 3.

in mounted rifle techniques and a regiment which served mounted on the Western Front – was converted to artillery. Similarly, the regiments of Bedfordshire; Berkshire; Buckinghamshire; Derbyshire; Dorset; Essex; Glasgow; Gloucestershire; Hertfordshire; Lancashire; Lincolnshire; the County and City of London; Lothians and Border; Northamptonshire; Northumberland; the two Nottinghamshire regiments; Oxfordshire; Surrey; Westmoreland and Cumberland; Worcestershire; and Lincolnshire had all seen mounted service during the First World War, yet were converted into different arms. On the other hand, four of those retained as cavalry in the post-war reforms – the Ayrshire, Earl of Chester's, Lanarkshire, and Shropshire Yeomanry regiments – had all been dismounted throughout their war service.<sup>131</sup> The decisions were far from perfect, but it is clear that those who had to make them came up against the same determined opposition as their predecessors.

Austin Gee stated that the Yeomanry Cavalry survived after 1815 because it had remained small by comparison to the volunteer infantry and its connections to the landed classes made it manageable.<sup>132</sup> It is easy to argue that the same traits prevailed for the majority of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, coupled inescapably to the important part the institution played as a constabulary. With the participation of the landed classes came political connections and private capital. This added further clout to the Yeomanry's social and political lobby, making a reckonable force in parliament that never drew too heavily on the annual budget. However, policing developments soon outpaced crude reactionary military forces. Furthermore, the demand for armed 'policing by presence' began to look tired and authoritarian, not reflecting political developments. It is then surprising that the force escaped central scrutiny until the 1860s and, perhaps even more surprising, that it would not be until 1892 that it was officially encouraged to focus on home defence over constabulary duties. Simple hindsight, however, does not easily allow for a contemporary understanding of domestic security concerns. So often did political movements threaten to overpower the 'new' police in their infancy that it was difficult to spurn an established auxiliary that had an extended history of augmenting the civil power. Furthermore, the apparent 'gloves on' approach adopted by those criticising and adjusting the Yeomanry alluded to an understanding of the sensibilities of men who participated at some personal cost and rarely engaged in military service through other channels. As a result, in spite of regulations, the

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<sup>131</sup> See Appendix 4.

<sup>132</sup> Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement*, p. 268.



findings of more than one committee were not fully carried through and, on occasion, were roundly ignored.

Statutes regarding the yeomanry were incomparably long lived. The institution's 'Magna Charta [sic]' – the 1804 Act – had re-established the Yeomanry on a permanent footing after the failure of the Peace of Amiens and lasted until 1888.<sup>133</sup> The National Defence Act of that year brought the Yeomanry under most of the conditions of the Militia Act, although in reality the actual changes were small. It is clear that governments of all political persuasions were unwilling or unable to undertake drastic alterations to the force in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but that did not stop them from attempting to rein it in, limit its size and, at times, effectively discourage membership. Establishments were slashed and smaller, outlying independent corps were cut away to remove the more distant and unobservable expressions of local authority. At other times privileges were allowed to become obsolete and the force languished without a real role between the 1860s and 1892. Even then its inclusion in the national mobilisation scheme covered up further parsimony that would ultimately have knock on effects for efficiency. For the most part, however, it will suffice to say that legislation rarely affected the Yeomanry, but when it did it took a concerted effort to make significant change.

As a result of its late 19<sup>th</sup> century inefficiency the force attracted spirited opposition who believed it was, 'rapidly vanishing out of existence', and ought to be allowed to, 'die a peaceful death'.<sup>134</sup> Similar observations have been made by historians of the Boer War. Elaine McFarland suggested that it was small, expensive, and lacked a role in imperial defence.<sup>135</sup> Ignoring costs, McFarland has overlooked the purpose of the Yeomanry's existence after 1892. It is true that they could not be mobilised for overseas service, but the statutes that governed them alongside the defensive planning of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century linked them to home defence. What is more, changing those statutes would involve considerable legal challenges and would likely have led to the dissolution of the force. Furthermore, in defence of the Yeomanry and Rifle Volunteers, it could be argued that imperial defence started at home.

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<sup>133</sup> 'Q. L.' *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, pp. 224 & 229.

<sup>134</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 24/05/1883, Vol. 279, Para. 872; and 13/03/1896, Vol. 38, Para. 925.

<sup>135</sup> McFarland, E. W. "Empire-Enlarging Genius", pp. 302-303.

Stephen Miller has taken this argument a step further and tagged the Yeomanry as a failing institution. Taking the reduction of its establishment figures between 1887 and 1899, Miller has suggested that the drying up of its pool of recruits was leading towards failure.<sup>136</sup> As well as confusing his dates, Miller has also made the error of quoting the establishment over the effective figure.<sup>137</sup> The difference between the two amounts to an actual reduction of 1,153 across the board as opposed to the potential loss of 2,492 had the Yeomanry reached this establishment figure. It is perhaps equally negative to show that the Yeomanry could not reach its establishment, but this was an attempt by the War Office to reflect the stability of returns since 1875; as was stated in parliament, 'a real force was much better in fact than a sham one'.<sup>138</sup> It was significantly reduced in numbers, but not necessarily collapsing. Costing less than ever yet still maintaining its social and political influence, it is likely that the institution would have continued within its bubble for as long as its officers were prepared to keep it up.

The military weaknesses of the Yeomanry late in the century are clear to see. Its manpower was sparse and its role against invasion questionable. A significant change then came with war in South Africa, a conflict that greatly aided the force in a number of ways. A massive expansion took place in reaction to conflict and forced reform, eventually culminating in its inclusion in the Territorial Force. The changes that allowed for this expansion, however, cleaved power and independence from Yeomanry elites and forced a collective accountability upon them. Subjected to the rigmarole and bureaucracy of the County Territorial Associations, the freedom to spend and organise was curtailed. How and why the Yeomanry Cavalry survived for such a prolonged period was largely based on a nexus of relative cheapness; parliamentary presence; the non-existence of constabularies; its diminutive size; and the nature of its membership. Although one of these elements would fade into insignificance after the middle of the century, the Yeomanry maintained disproportional influence in parliament and maintained a social presence that made it surprisingly robust. With this social and parliamentary pressure combined with its largely self-funded nature, it was easier to allow it to exist and maintain low

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<sup>136</sup> Miller, S. M. *Volunteers on the Veld – British Citizen-Soldiers and the South African War, 1899-1902* (UOP, 2007), pp. 26 & 177.

<sup>137</sup> Miller quotes the figure for 1886, 14,405. The 1887 figure should read 14,383 and the reduction in establishment 2,492 and not 2,514. *BPP: C. 4952, 1887*; and *BPP: C. 5267, 1888*.

<sup>138</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 12/09/1893, Vol. 17, Para. 962.

expectations of its abilities. When allowed to increase in size, the structure and nature of the Yeomanry's management was changed to bring it under greater central control; nonetheless, even in the aftermath of the First World War, the force could still exercise surprising powers of interference.

## Chapter II

### The Officer Corps

To raise a corps of Yeomanry required input from different sections of society: officers had to be capable of supporting the fledgling operation financially and to command the respect of the other ranks; the other ranks had to be of a reliable constitution, likely to obey the orders of their officers, and capable of sacrificing time to the corps. These fundamental truths suggest an element of fragility – or at least the potential for it – without powerful and determined leadership. Given its extended and continuous existence it is clear that the Yeomanry could boast such management from its own officers as well as its adjutants. From encouraging and enlisting tenants for the cause, to investing private capital and lending land, the officers of the Yeomanry played a large part in the reasons for its existence and survival. Corps could and would continue well below strength if other ranks could not readily be found; indeed, as will be shown in the next chapter, this was arguably the natural state of many regiments in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In contrast, it could be difficult to operate effectively with a shortage of officers, and more than one corps was allowed to dissipate after its leading members abandoned it. The role of this chapter will be to address the fundamentally important position of officers in the peacetime Yeomanry by questioning what these men brought to the force and what membership offered in return.

Chapter one has shown that the 19<sup>th</sup> century peak of the Yeomanry Cavalry's manpower was in excess of 30,000 men, but only 1,662 of this number were found amongst its officer corps.<sup>1</sup> At the forces all time low in 1895 these figures came closer to 10,000 and 602 respectively, equating to a greater than 60 per cent decline in officer numbers. The myriad reasons behind this decline included the reduced threat from overseas invasion and internal insurrection, government retrenchment, agricultural depression, and wider social pressures. Beyond such general strains on society, however, there are more specific questions to be asked regarding the officer corps and its apparent resilience in comparison to the rank and file. Was the pattern of its rise and fall driven by the same conditions or was it conducted under its own set of pressures and influences? Answering such a question demands some understanding of

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<sup>1</sup> Excluding adjutants, surgeons etc. *BPP*: 189, 1821; Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1820.

those that constructed and maintained these regiments, which, given the lengthy timescale in question, is harder to answer than it might at first appear. Populist work has routinely sought to reinforce the connection between landlords and tenants and, in particular, the importance of those most dominant families within the counties.<sup>2</sup> Whilst there was often involvement from both elements, this was clearly not the sole equation within every regiment of Yeomanry. The limited academic work on the subject has gone further and shown the wider implications of membership as the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed.<sup>3</sup> Both Ian Beckett and Andrew Gilks have raised questions regarding social climbing and the establishment of families in county society, but there is more to be said regarding the connection between the institution and wider society as well as the reflection of membership on an individual. As it was unquestionably expensive, and seemed increasingly futile after the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it remains to be seen what conditions existed to entice so many significant names to its ranks. Official figures from 1902 would state that the cost to officers was on average more than £100 per annum in excess of the available allowances, but it would be extremely naïve to assume that this was ever a maximum and that expenditure did not to some degree relate directly to rank. Given the potential for large sums of unsupported expenses, officers would have to be capable of absorbing such outgoings as well as sacrificing time to the formalities of command. With this in mind it seems logical to accept that the preponderance of aristocratic figures and the historical connection with Victorian county society was a product of an unavoidable marriage between an expensive institution and established wealth. However, the accuracy of this conjecture will be discussed alongside the place of the *nouveau riche* as well as later urban manifestations of the movement.

As has been shown in the first chapter, the raising of amateur military units went far beyond a veil of defence in case of French invasion. Revolutionary Europe still presented a significant threat in the form of an eruption of domestic discontent through observation and imitation, a threat that was held to be real into the 1850s. Most concerned were those who dominated the traditional power structures of the country, but they found an ally amongst the middle-classes and those with hard won property and livelihoods. As the Duke of Richmond pointed out, however, the

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<sup>2</sup> Mileham, P. J. R. *The Yeomanry Regiments*.

<sup>3</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, pp. 189-190; and Gilks, 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry', pp. 137-143.

problem with a volunteer force is finding people of 'rank and character to undertake to lead them, who from their influence over those who engage as privates could supply the want of military law, and maintain respect and the necessary degree of subordination'.<sup>4</sup> By this definition a commission in the Yeomanry demanded pre-existing authority which, in relation to the composition of the other ranks, represented a very select group of candidates. Nonetheless, even in the 1830s there was a belief held centrally that sufficient quantities of 'respectable farmers would unite with the gentlemen and magistrates of the count[ies] at the establishment of a respectable Yeomanry force', and that this would be the most viable deterrent to working class agitation.<sup>5</sup> How far this arrangement was implemented will be discussed in chapter four, but it is worth attempting to quantify officer strength to understand periods of transition and the capacity of the force's leadership. Nonetheless, just as Blackstock found for the Irish Yeomanry, attempting to plot officer numbers during the 1790s and early 19<sup>th</sup> century is very difficult due to a lack of resources. Furthermore, tracking effective officer figures against establishment numbers is practically impossible before 1875 as the official returns rarely provided the target figures. In fact, as Table 2.1 suggests, although Yeomanry numbers were recorded, it was rare for officer figures to be disaggregated from the overall totals of strength.

Despite the limited evidence, these figures still offer interesting trends which can be built upon after 1875. The story shown in Table 2.1, although made less clear by the want of detailed figures, does plot the 19<sup>th</sup> century reductions. Despite a diminutive surge mid-century, when combined with Chart 2.1 it effectively documents a decline through to the turn of the century. Although Irish figures were, on the whole, stable during the war with France, its decline was actually far more rapid in the 1820s as it retreated north before disbandment.<sup>6</sup> However, even with the greater detail offered after 1875, analysis is still subject to anomalies. In the return of 1875, for example, a confused picture is presented: despite a number of regiments collectively wanting 27 officers, the cumulative supernumeraries of other regiments meant that the Yeomanry as a whole was 16 officers over the desired maximum.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> WSRO, PHA/53. Letter: Duke of Richmond to Earl of Egremont, 17/06/1794.

<sup>5</sup> CKS, U840/C313. Letter: Lord John Russell to Lord Camden, 02/11/1830. Russell was at this time paymaster of the forces. Prest, J. 'Russell, John, first Earl Russell (1792-1878)' (*ODNB*, OUP, 2009), [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24325>, accessed 27/08/2010].

<sup>6</sup> Blackstock, *An Ascendancy Army*, pp. 113-122.

<sup>7</sup> Oversubscribed regiments provided an extra 59 officers to the total. *BPP*: C.1429, 1876; Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1875.

Ignoring such anomalies, Chart 2.1 shows establishment figures against the total number of effective officers serving through the date range. In the 38 years that are comparable with target strength, the Yeomanry Cavalry never achieved its establishment in officers and, although the rise and fall mirrored the establishment, it remained unobtainable.

Table 2.1: Numbers of Officers, 1795-1855<sup>8</sup>

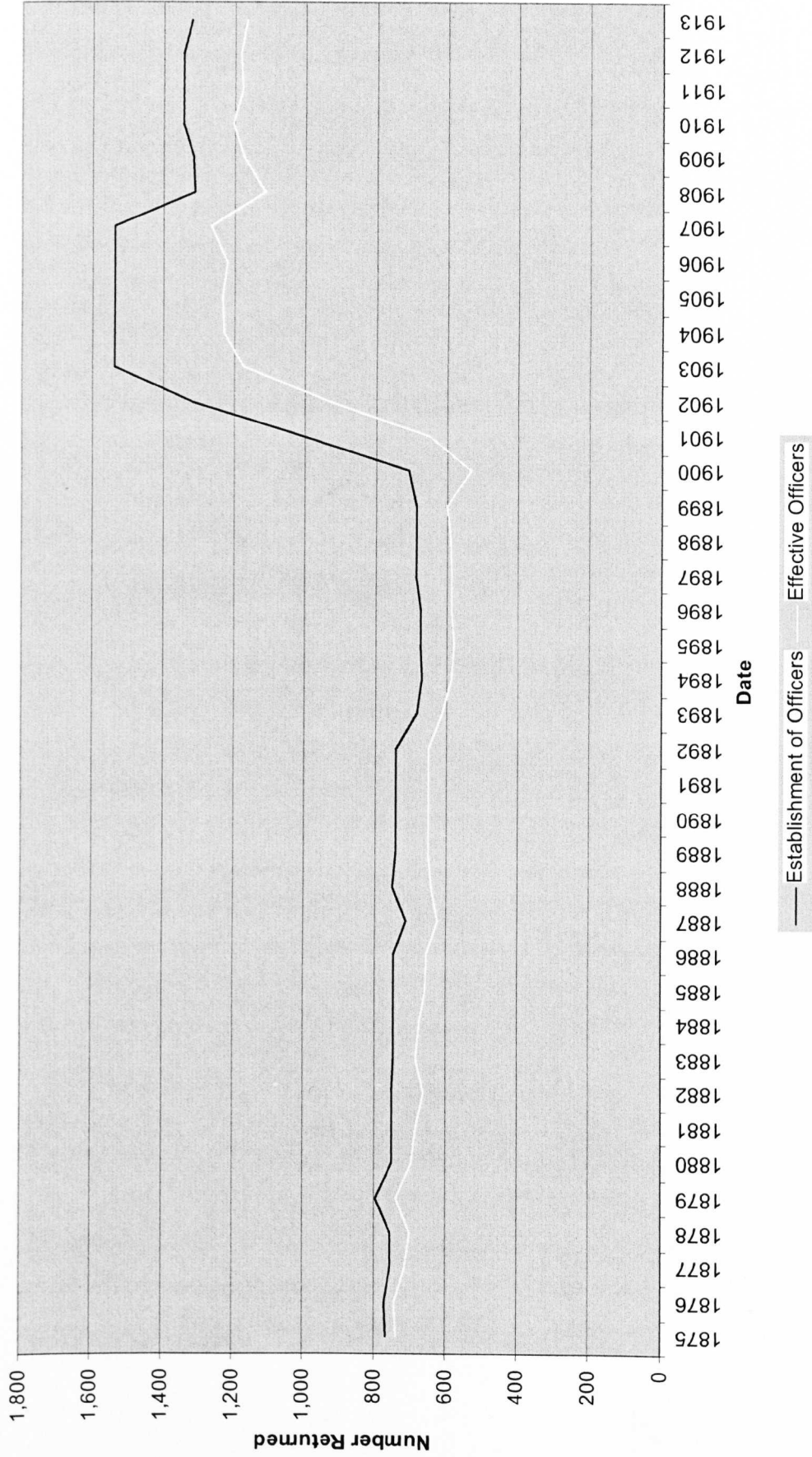
| <u>Year</u> | <u>Number Returned</u> |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 1795        | 240                    |
| 1797        | 691                    |
| 1820        | 1,662                  |
| 1833        | 1,176                  |
| 1837        | 1,135                  |
| 1840        | 835                    |
| 1845        | 896                    |
| 1849        | 689                    |
| 1855        | 958                    |

Although it proves nothing profound on its own, it is clear from these results that the Yeomanry struggled, at least from 1875, to find a full complement of officers. Chart 2.2 offers a slightly different perspective on these figures by showing the percentage shortage after 1875 and perhaps more accurately plots this decline. Ignoring the years of rapid expansion under St John Brodrick's reforms in 1901 and the change of conditions under Haldane in 1907, the steady and persistent decline through the 1870s and 1880s is clear. Although circumstances were looking considerably better by 1893, with only 30 men left wanting from the total establishment, as one inspecting officer had noted a year earlier, 'the efficiency of [a] regiment depends entirely on the commanding and other officers doing their duty'.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *No. 2 – Return of His Majesties Land Forces, December 1795.* (Digitised by University of Cambridge, 2007, accessed through ProQuest Parliamentary Papers); *List of the Officers of the... Corps and Troops of Gentlemen and Yeomanry* (War Office, 22/06/1797); *BPP*: 189, 1821: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1820; *BPP*: 67, 1834: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1833; *BPP*: 448, 1837-38: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1837; *BPP*: 300, 1842: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1840; *BPP*: 494, 1847: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1842-46; *BPP*: 121, 1850: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1843-1849; *BPP*: 370, 1854-55: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1855.

<sup>9</sup> *BPP*: C. 7244, 1893-94: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1893; and TNA, WO32/7237/04/1882. Memo from Inspector of Auxiliary Cavalry, Colonel Hon. C. W. Thesiger, C.23/02/1882.

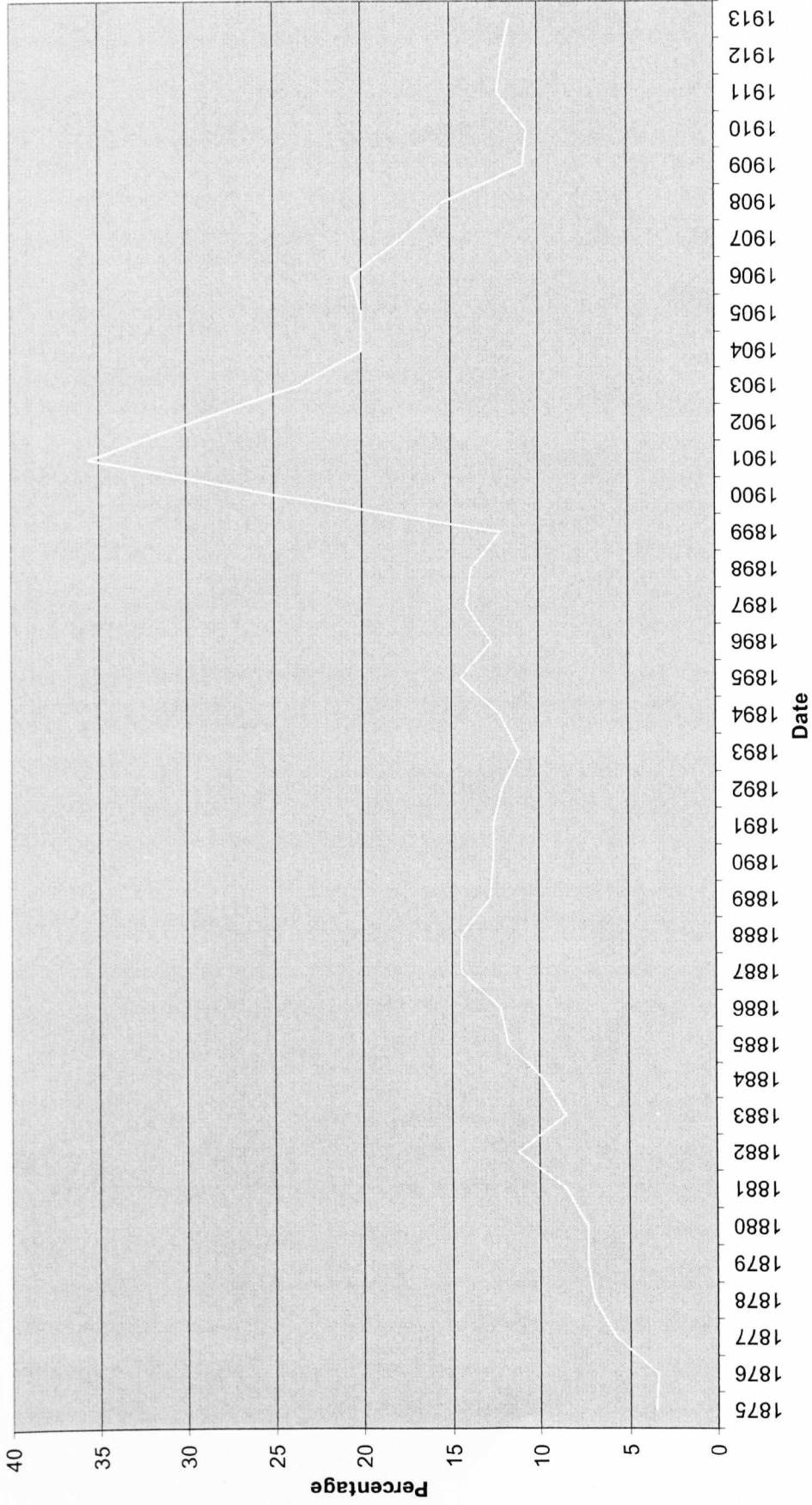
Chart 2.1: The Number of Serving Officers, 1875-1913



See bibliography for inspection returns.



Chart 2.2: Percentage Shortage of Officers, 1875-1913



See bibliography for inspection returns.

Whilst units could and did function with fewer enlisted men, as another senior observer similarly remarked, '[the] secret of efficiency and success of Yeomanry lies with the officers'.<sup>10</sup> Thus, it was considerably harder for the Yeomanry to function without effective leadership. As these charts show, there was a deficit of officers in many regiments, the result of which was not only a hole in the chain of leadership and authority, but also a hole in the finances. Attempting to understand the decline of the officer corps in greater depth might seem unnecessary given the clear environmental factors that would have influenced the institution. However, an understanding of its social composition, the way in which it changed through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the specific factors for decline uncovers a more complex web of possible answers.

Although we have the benefit of the *Army Lists*, they tell us very little about motivations which are just as complex as understanding those of the other ranks. Having made an attempt to do this, however, Gilks's work shows the officer corps to have been dominated by the landed elite, who were bent on maintaining their supremacy by excluding deliberately certain sections of society.<sup>11</sup> There are, however, fundamental problems with Gilks's analysis. The keeping of horses is stated as an exclusive condition governing membership, though in a voluntary *cavalry* force with limited government backing, the targeting of pre-existing horse owners has to be considered of little consequence as a deliberate condition. What is more, before the repeal of the horse tax in 1874, exemption would have made ownership more affordable for those who required animals for work: if anything, such a condition probably broadened participation. Uniform and related expenses certainly made an enormous dent into personal funds with many examples spiralling into hundreds of pounds, but the example of one Leicestershire officer spending nearly £700 on his appointments (likely to be in the tens of thousands in modern currency) seems in reality to be very much an exception.<sup>12</sup>

It is, nonetheless, impossible to separate officership in the Yeomanry from significant financial burden, regardless of date. Although the costs to most would have been considerably less, it was high enough for some to realise that they could not maintain their position in the force. In the summer of 1806, for example, one captain

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<sup>10</sup> *BPP: C.6675*, 1892: Brownlow Committee on the Condition of the Yeomanry. Colonel E. A. Wood, commanding 7/57<sup>th</sup> Regimental District, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> Gilks, 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry', p. 92.

<sup>12</sup> John Trollope, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Kesteven, spent this sum on three uniforms before joining the Leicestershire Yeomanry Cavalry in the 1870s. Gilks, 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry', p. 94.

of the East Kent Yeomanry wrote to his commandant that he was resigning his commission on account of having 'been at the head of a troop which has been attended with a very considerable personal expense and inconvenience'.<sup>13</sup> Five years earlier, his uniform and horse appointments would have cost him a grand total of £86 2s 6d: a far from insignificant sum. Nonetheless, in reply the captain was told that his only expense should be his clothes, arms, horse furniture, and a dinner once a year – the latter even being avoidable if he could not manage it.<sup>14</sup> Whilst this provides an air of reality to the example provided by Gilks, the sums expended – especially the initial costs on taking a position – would have remained substantial to most households. Whether these costs were imposed deliberately and why they might have been will be discussed below, but the concluding statements made by the commandant in the Kent case read: 'captains of troops...should be of a station in life not to regard a little expense'; whatever an officer's motivations or personal beliefs, membership to a corps of Yeomanry was recognised and accepted as being costly.<sup>15</sup>

The importance attached to private capital did not change through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Officers were not only there to command men, but also to set an example, bankroll troops, and provide a respectable face for the regiment in county society. The latter two factors were unquestionably connected, and the treatment of men not fulfilling these duties was in some cases ruthless. In the late 1860s, for example, Lieutenant Griffith of the Queen's Own Royal Staffordshire Yeomanry found himself cashiered after being declared bankrupt with the collapse of his brewery. A regimental board of inquiry was convened to discuss the case and later decided that his, 'present position [was] no longer one which an officer in the Q. O. Royal Yeo[manry] ought to occupy'. The adjutant subsequently ordered him to tender his resignation. Despite apparently contesting this decision, the damage to the man's reputation was deemed irreparable and intolerable. This, however, is not to say that the decision was simply accepted. In justifying the case the adjutant went as far as forwarding to the Inspector General of the Reserve Forces a letter outlining how the firm *John & Arthur Griffith & Co.* had become insolvent and thus his position in the regiment untenable. As if to suggest the existence of such prejudices beyond the Queen's Own Royal Staffordshire Yeomanry, it was forcefully noted in the original message that, 'it is not customary

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<sup>13</sup> CKS, EKY/Z1. Letter: Captain Paynter to Captain R. Cobb, 14/06/1806.

<sup>14</sup> CKS, EKY/Z1. Letter: Captain R. Cobb to Captain Paynter, 16/06/1806.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

for officers to remain in [Yeomanry] regiments...after they have made any sort of arrangement with their creditors'.<sup>16</sup>

Although Griffith's case seems rare, it is clear that regimental expenditure played a part in his downfall. Frequent examples of this expense can be found within the 1892 Brownlow Committee, where interviews with Yeomanry officers regarding the internal finance and functioning of regiments were recorded. When asked the costs in excess of allowances to a captain of a troop the average answer given by the interviewees was nearly £60 a year in maintenance and potentially over £100. On top of this, an individual might typically be expected to pay close to £150 for his uniform and contribute anywhere between £5 and £50 to the regimental fund (depending on rank and regiment) and occasionally a separate amount for band expenses. These specified contributions do not, however, seem to have been the final word in the matter. For example, before being promoted to Major in 1840, Walter Long of the Wiltshire Yeomanry voluntarily provided an annual dinner for his troop of over 60 men; given that his path to promotion took almost exactly 20 years, the cumulative sum expended must have been substantial. In a less organised sense, other regiments, such as the Sherwood Rangers, shunned a regimental fund and expected officers to settle costs on a case by case basis. Such an arrangement would certainly add a sense of unpredictability to financial demands, but as has been noted, an officer was expected to incur expenses without concern.<sup>17</sup>

Considering these spending arrangements, the Earl of Cork and Orrery stated to the Brownlow Committee, 'unless an officer has a sum of money to fall back upon, I do not think it possible to carry on a regiment with the present allowances'.<sup>18</sup> In the case of his own regiment, the Earl had taken over a fund of such a size that, although depleted, still bore the brunt of regimental expenditure after 27 years. Such a substantial sum of invested capital does seem unusual, though it was not uncommon for colonels to bankroll regiments with an annual allowance. Indeed, Lord Plymouth of the Worcestershire Yeomanry paid out over £6,000 to help raise and equip his regiment in 1831 and then proceeded to allow them £1,000 p.a. to defray the usual expenses; Colonel Robert Clive, his successor, agreed to continue with this

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<sup>16</sup> SRO, D1300/2/1. Letter: Adj. Captain P. C. G. Webster to Lieutenant Griffith. 24/09/1869; 15/10/1869; 11/11/1869; and Letter: Captain P. C. G. Webster (Adjutant) to Major-General J. Lindsay, WO. 17/03/1870.

<sup>17</sup> The Earl was Colonel of the North Somerset Yeomanry. Brownlow Committee, 1892, pp. 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 34 & 36.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 36.

arrangement.<sup>19</sup> Thus, it can be concluded that outgoing expenditure was always in excess of the pay and allowances provided by the annual vote, but at the same time this was not a situation connected to late century retrenchment. The earlier Lawrenson committee of 1861 revealed many similarities and it was repeatedly suggested that the pay and allowances for officers were so inadequate that they were practically nonexistent. Despite this committee's desire to reduce such allowances further, however, there was not a great deal of resistance assuming that the money was reinvested elsewhere in the movement. Nonetheless, Major Tomlinson of the Queen's Own Royal Staffordshire Yeomanry did express his concerns with this suggestion when he stated:

We do not know what the pay is. It never comes into our hands, it goes into a general fund for the mess and for other expenses...I do not think that any serve with reference to the pay...The effect of the reduction [however]...would in my view be to shift the burden from the state to individuals.<sup>20</sup>

This pooling of pay was not restricted to a single regiment, with a number of others following a similar course to help contribute to mess bills.<sup>21</sup> What is clear is that, so long as there was disparity between the pay of other ranks and officers, personal remuneration meant little. Spiers's work on the late-Victorian army has shown that regular military service was one way to secure the approval of local society. Viewed as fulfilling obligations to public service, the sons of notable landed families as well as a number of peers pursued military careers, both as long-service professionals and for short stints in fashionable regiments.<sup>22</sup> The purchase system (until its suspension in 1871) as well as family connections were powerful factors in securing commissions and, even if an individual failed the Sandhurst entry exam, the Militia 'backdoor' could still provide access. Despite evidence for the popularity of the army in landed society, this argument fails to answer for men's involvement in the Yeomanry. There were discussions concerning a Yeomanry 'backdoor' in the House of Commons in 1902, but there were issues regarding the length of training in comparison to the

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<sup>19</sup> 'Q. L.' *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, p. 50.

<sup>20</sup> Lawrenson Committee, 1861, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> The Worcestershire Yeomanry and Yorkshire Hussars for example. *Ibid*, p. 14.

<sup>22</sup> Spiers, E. M. *The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1902* (MUP, 1992), pp. 95-96 & 163.

Militia. Nonetheless, during these debates it was stated that a Yeomanry subaltern could seek a transfer but he 'must have attended two full Yeomanry trainings without any leave, and be recommended by his commanding officer to be allowed to compete (on the same terms as a Militia subaltern) for a cavalry commission'.<sup>23</sup> It is likely that this had been happening unofficially for some time, but what is more striking is the institution's popularity with retired officers. As will be shown later, service shared many of the benefits of regular service and catered for specific activities inseparable from county society. Nonetheless, after the 1850s, Yeomanry service was more of an indulgence or hobby and rather than make money, an individual was likely to haemorrhage it.

The financial situation fostered by the force has been said to have deliberately served the aristocracy and squirearchy, but this is not a new concept; the idea had clearly leached into the literature, theatre, and caricatures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, it is unlikely that relatively successful middle-class men would be able to offer the time and money to the cause. That newly appointed captains in the South Salopian regiment were encouraged to buy quantities of champagne that would equate to a typical working-class annual wage is of little consequence; even the unavoidable expenses of service would have been unobtainable. Perhaps what this does show is the disparity in wages and spending power that existed between occupational groups, but such realities were, of course, a product of wider 19<sup>th</sup> century British society. It is incorrect to simply assume that these arrangements were the result of a deliberate policy, as the basic necessities of a horse, saddle, forage and other costs could not be supplied on top of the money already provided by government; expenses were, after all, a contentious issue. Convenient though it was, these conditions were forced upon the Yeomanry as service was inherently expensive and government support could only go so far. Though in any number of cases individual spending was encouraged and was at times shocking, Haldane's changes in 1908 did provide some promise of relief. Under paragraphs 404 or 405 of the Territorial Force Regulations a new or

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<sup>23</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 20/03/1902. Vol. 105, Para. 535.

<sup>24</sup> Elton, Sir. A. H. *Below the Surface: a Story of English Country Life*, 1868, pp. 80 – 90; Surtees, R. S. *Handley Cross; or the Spa Hunt – a Sporting Tale* (Colburn, London, 1843), p. 51 & *Mr Sponge's Sporting Tour* (Bradbury & Evans, London, 1860), pp. 78-82 & 112-113; 'The Boarding School' (*The Examiner*, 28/08/1841 & 4/09/1841); Stephens, J. R. 'Coyne, Joseph Stirling (1803–1868)', (ODNB, OUP, 2004), [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6544>, accessed 08/09/2008]; Coyne, J. S. 'Our National Defences (or the Cockshot Yeomanry) – a Farce' (National Acting Drama Office, Suffolk, 1848); 'White Sergeants (or the Buttermilk Volunteers)' (*The Morning Post*, 08/05/1850); and British Museum: 1868,0808.6367; 1876,1014.34; 1935,0522.4.62; 1868,0808.8463; and 1859,0316.145.

transferring officer could claim a grant of up to £20 to adjust or buy new uniform. It was under this scheme that Cuthbert Headlam – a product of the minor gentry and later a barrister – obtained a commission in the Bedfordshire Yeomanry, proving to some extent that a relatively modest income could suffice. It is worth noting, however, that he was still billed for £90 when equipping himself for his first camp.<sup>25</sup> Rightly or wrongly the failure to inject funds throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century meant that officership remained expensive; though there was change in the following century, it did not resolve the problem. That this made the force reliant on the wealthy and thus politically trustworthy was an expedient by-product of these circumstances.

For the most part the influential and politically powerful members of provincial society were nearly always its wealthiest, which generally equated to the aristocracy and squirearchy. This is not to say that being gentry was an exclusive condition for Yeomanry officership, but the dominance of wealth in the officer corps was to a great extent the measure of the Yeomanry's existence. Due to the money and influence that was brought to regiments, one observer stated, 'the English country-gentleman is *par excellence* the leader of such a body'.<sup>26</sup> Although generous spending was encouraged and individual wealth welcomed, it must not be overlooked that true control over appointments lay in the hands of senior officers and – before being relieved of all powers bar suggesting first commissions in the 1870s – the lords lieutenant.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, in one early case in Fifeshire, two acting subalterns reverted back to the ranks after the lord lieutenant expressed doubt over gazetting them permanently.<sup>28</sup> Despite later initiatives to open the ranks to aid efficiency and numbers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the means to do so always equated to more money from the centre. Unfortunately, due to its existing costs in comparison to other corps, this was always unacceptable and a *laissez faire* approach to Yeomanry expenditure became the norm. Whilst the requirements of service were expedient in limiting candidates, it is clear that other, more powerful prejudices were at work in the maintenance of the *status quo* within the officer corps.

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<sup>25</sup> Beach, J. *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam, 1910-1942* (The History Press, Stroud), p. 25.

<sup>26</sup> TNA, WO32/7237. WO meeting regarding Yeomanry organisation, 30/12/1881.

<sup>27</sup> Examples of conversations between commanding officers and Lords Lieutenant: ORO, L/M VII/ii/1. Lord Lieutenant correspondence: Yeomanry Commissions.

<sup>28</sup> NAS, GD1/555/1. Letter book No. 3. Letter: James Stuart to Lieutenant- Colonel Thompson, 28/07/1810.

With prejudices in place, finding men to commission was not a simple task. For those already commissioned, these issues continued to influence their chances of promotion. In regular military forces the rate of promotion is essential to the career soldier; indeed, this was one of the reasons that the Indian Army attracted many of the best in the British system.<sup>29</sup> The importance of this factor in auxiliary forces was quite different, however, as higher rank carried with it quite different benefits and responsibilities. In an analysis of the system from the 1870s through to 1899 we find that promotion from 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant took on average two years and seven months, but ranged from one year in West Kent through to five years in Lanarkshire. The promotion from lieutenant to captain averaged seven years and two months, ranging from as much as 19 years in Buckinghamshire, to as little as two in the same regiment. Promotion from captain to major – typically the longest wait – took on average 14 years, though in the West Kent Yeomanry it took as many as 25 for one candidate and as little as five for another. The final promotion from major to lieutenant-colonel took on average 11 years and three months, but as many twenty-four in Lanarkshire or as little as five in West Kent. What these results show is that anyone joining at the very bottom could expect to spend more than 35 years in a corps before they reached the top.<sup>30</sup>

Promotions after 1900 were predictably swifter due to the expansion of the Yeomanry. One affect of the Boer War was vastly accelerated promotion at the more senior ranks. Although promotion from subaltern to lieutenant was nearly a year longer, for those already on the list the story was quite different. To make the rank of captain, a lieutenant could expect to have served not much more than half as long as his late 19<sup>th</sup> century counterpart. On more than one occasion this was as little as a year and only extended as far as 13 years. A captain could also expect promotion to major more than two and a half times faster than those in the system between 1870 and 1900. Again the variation was restricted, running from as little as one year and to a peak of 13 years. With the expansion of regiments there was even room for movement at the top, with majors reaching promotion more than four years sooner than they might have done in the earlier century. Ranging from as little as three years through to

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<sup>29</sup> Heathcote, T. A. 'The Army of British India' in Chandler, D. & Beckett, I. F. W. (eds.) *The Oxford History of the British Army* (OUP, 1996), p. 363.

<sup>30</sup> Calculated from the *Army List* between 1870 and 1900. Sample: 337 officers from eight regiments (1<sup>st</sup> Devon, West Kent, Wiltshire, Pembrokeshire, Lower Ward of Lanarkshire, Northumberland, Hampshire, and Buckinghamshire).



11 years, the longest delay experienced was the average time that their 19<sup>th</sup> century peers had suffered. In direct comparison to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, an officer starting at the bottom of the Yeomanry could reach the top more than 15 years sooner in the Edwardian period.<sup>31</sup>

There are some predictable reasons for the accelerated promotions after 1900. With St. John Brodrick's huge expansion of the Home Yeomanry in reaction to the Boer War there was an increased demand for officers that had immediate effects. In West Kent and the Lower Ward of Lanarkshire almost all the Yeomanry officers serving below the rank of major jumped up a rank in the list. As a result, men who were eight years junior to their peers shared in these promotions.<sup>32</sup> By promoting the experienced, regiments expanded in what might be considered the most sensible way possible, using their already serving officers as a cadre. Also predictable, however, is the rate at which this flourish of activity declined. Promotions after 1903 reverted to the sedentary pace of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there being only a little more than a third of the number per year as was experienced between 1900 and 1902.<sup>33</sup> What is more, these later promotions were not the product of an evolved system of meritocracy or, to provide a measure for merit, war experience and proficiency certificates.

Examples show that other attributes still played a prominent part in the promotional prospects of individuals. In the Royal 1<sup>st</sup> Devon Yeomanry, for example, Alfred Dyke Acland was promoted from major to lieutenant-colonel in 1910 despite four of his fellow majors having seen service in South Africa and three of them holding proficiency certificates. Having been gazetted major at the same time as Viscount Hambleton, it seems his later promotion was based on his time in service or his willingness to take on the extra expense and responsibility. Hambleton would assume this position in December 1914, again ahead of the same majors, again presumably due to similar factors. Although the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry promoted four war-experienced captains with proficiency certificates between 1908 and 1911, their new lieutenant-colonel lacked similar attributes. This is not to say that all regiments failed to embrace change, indeed the Hampshire Carabiners' two lieutenant-colonels appointed in 1907 and 1912 both had seen active service and

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<sup>31</sup> Calculated from the *Army List* between 1900 and 1914. Sample: 370 officers from the same eight regiments.

<sup>32</sup> H. L. C. Brassey (West Kent Yeomanry) went from Captain in 1899 to Major in 1901. His fellow Captain, J. F. Edmeades, waited from 1876.

<sup>33</sup> The sample showed 34 promotions a year between 1900 and 1902 compared to 12 a year between 1903 and 1914.

carried the proficiency certificate. Similarly, three of the four majors in the Pembroke Yeomanry and Northumberland Hussars had served in South Africa, although none possessed proficiency certificates; something every one of the Northumberland Hussars' captains had. Making judgements on such a restricted date range is limiting given the tendency for officers to exhibit various skills and experiences. There were clearly cases where 'grey hairs' outweighed the experience of war or the proficiency certificates issued by government. At the same time, however, it should be remembered that there were financial and time considerations concerned with promotion and that these seem more often to have been deciding factors; though an individual might be best suited professionally, they might be less so financially.

What these results do not hint at, however, are the anomalies. It was, for example, extremely common for an officer to enter at the rank of captain and serve the full extent of his career in that position; this might be 20 years or more. Others might not stay with the regiment for very long, with the highest turnover predictably amongst the lowest commissioned rank. Finally, the results also show little of one of the most important factors in this analysis: the 'leapfrogging' of ranks. In an unusual number of cases men skipped the rank of major to go straight to the position of lieutenant-colonel. Although in some cases this might reflect the size of the corps – field ranks were restricted in regiments below a certain number of troops – it could also highlight other concerns. This might involve the refusal of promotion by a major due to economic or time restrictions, the result of which was the 'leapfrogging' of a junior officer with more of both to spend. In the Hampshire Carabiners in 1895, for example, senior resignations led to the promotion of Captain Herman LeRoy-Lewis to Major and Captain William Woods to Lieutenant-Colonel; the latter being only slightly senior in the rank of captain. Whilst this decision was based on seniority amongst junior ranks, promotion and appointment were not always directed or driven by experience, ability or time in rank.

In a number of cases it appears that the influence of commanding officers was the most significant force in appointments and promotions. In the 1820s Lieutenant-Colonel Sir John Kennaway of the East Devon Legion was adamant who should fill the vacancies in his regiment and maintained a number of qualifying prerequisites for potential officers. When one vacancy opened on the death of a captain, the two candidates put forward were assessed on their 'qualifications in land and property'

and the respectability they would bring to the corps.<sup>34</sup> Such outlooks were in no way restricted to Devon or the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the Warwickshire Yeomanry in the late 1840s, for example, Lord Aylesford informed the Earl of Warwick that he would be resigning his lieutenant-colonelcy, but went on to recommend his replacement; on this occasion Cornet Lord Guernsey. Amongst the most junior officers in the corps, he was raised to a majority; impressive for a 24 year old.<sup>35</sup> Again in Warwickshire, though nearly 20 years later, a retiring troop captain informed his colonel of his own desired successor, stating that Cornet Lord Craven was one of the largest land owners in the county and should have his own troop; this he duly received in the same year.<sup>36</sup> The continuity shown in Warwickshire provides a snapshot of regimental politics and the conflicting pressures that governed promotion. Whilst diligent service and time in rank were cues for promotion, so too were local influence, the ability to recruit tenants, and the readiness to accept further financial burdens.

Though junior appointments were not always easy to fill, stagnation was still an issue higher up. To solve this problem, in 1859, the Earl of Lonsdale was told to increase the size of his Westmoreland and Cumberland Yeomanry so that he might appoint field officers.<sup>37</sup> In other cases, however, it is clear that rank was of less consequence than membership in its own right. In Devon, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir John Kennaway made this point a number of times in correspondence, in one case stating that, although he only had a cornetcy available, '[within] a reg[iment] of this kind rank...is of so little that I trust this will not prevent your joining in now.'<sup>38</sup> In another case regarding a half-pay officer for the post of adjutant, he proclaimed that the only rank he could offer was a lieutenantancy and that, 'in a corps of this kind, half-pay officers of much superior rank to his have taken inferior commissions and been glad of them'.<sup>39</sup> In Fifeshire, too, it was mentioned by one candidate early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that he 'consider[ed] it no less honourable to fill the lowest than the highest

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<sup>34</sup> DRO, 961M-0/O/4/3. Letter: Sir John Kennaway to John Bere, 04/06/1823; and Sir John Kennaway to John Bere, 27/05/1824.

<sup>35</sup> WRO, CR1886/Box616/17. Letter (copy): Lord Aylesford to Earl Warwick, 13/01/1848; and *London Gazette*, 31/03/1848.

<sup>36</sup> WRO, CR1886/Box635. 'Yeomanry Letters', un-catalogued. Letter: G. C. Leigh to Earl Warwick, 05/02/1867; and *Army List*, 1867.

<sup>37</sup> NAS, GD164/1373/5. Letter: Rosolyn to Earl Lonsdale, 07/05/1859.

<sup>38</sup> DRO, 961M-0/O/4/3. Letter: Sir John Kennaway to J. Hunt, 08/06/1825.

<sup>39</sup> DRO, 961M-0/O/4/3. Letter: Sir John Kennaway to Mark Kennaway, 04/10/1821.

place in a regiment of Yeomanry'.<sup>40</sup> The apparent insignificance of rank and the rarity of field positions was a by-product of stagnation in the officer corps, itself largely caused by careful management. This, however, is not to say that officers did not compete for the rarer positions when they became available or that it was unknown for them to resign if they were unsuccessful; indeed, this took place in Ayrshire in the late 1840s.<sup>41</sup> This was undeniably why some influential young men were willing to join the Yeomanry at the bottom and why some who thought they deserved more became embittered by their failure in leadership challenges.<sup>42</sup> Others, such as Albany H. Charlesworth, left the Yeomanry to try their luck elsewhere. Having been gazetted a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant in the 2<sup>nd</sup> West Yorkshire Yeomanry in 1875, he left with the same rank two years later to join the West Riding of Yorkshire Rifle Volunteers. Here he was able to secure instant promotion to a majority and, by 1891, was promoted again to lieutenant-colonel.<sup>43</sup>

Although men took Yeomanry officership seriously enough to compete for promotion and take their leave in the event of failure, for many, finding officers could be a constant irritation. To secure officers for the Fife Yeomanry in the 1830s, Earl Levan sent out a large number of dinner invitations to discuss commissions. In reply Levan received a stack of letters declining the positions, most notably due to the lack of, 'fortunes and influence'. Most did not feel so strongly about declining the dinner invitation.<sup>44</sup> In other instances lords lieutenant applied more pressure, in some cases suggesting it was an individual's duty to serve. This was certainly the case in Perthshire in the 1820s.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, even with such influential requests, it is clear that not all relented.<sup>46</sup>

Apart from the problem of restricting the number of candidates, the search for the wealthy and influential also brought other drawbacks. The propensity for regiments to foster family connections meant that some exhibited a marked tendency to promote to maintain legacies. As a result troop commands and higher ranks were

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<sup>40</sup> NAS, GD1/555/1. Letter book No. 3. Letter: James Stuart to Lieutenant-Colonel Thompson, 28/07/1810.

<sup>41</sup> NAS, GD149/387. Letters concerning commissions in Ayrshire Yeomanry, 06/12/1846-20/12/1848.

<sup>42</sup> Sir Henry Hoare, Bt. is one example. *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 10/06/1869. Vol. 196, Para. 1576.

<sup>43</sup> *London Gazette*, 06/04/1877; *Army List*, 1877; *York Herald*, 20/11/1891.

<sup>44</sup> NAS, GD26/9/144. Letters concerning Fife Yeomanry, 06/06/1831-07/06/1831.

<sup>45</sup> NAS, GD508/9/39/2. Letter: Duke of Atholl (LL Perthshire) to Colonel George Patterson, 20/04/1820.

<sup>46</sup> NAS, GD16/52/43. Letter: William Maule to Earl Airlie, 28/03/1831.

often kept in family hands. Though there were distinct advantages to this arrangement – tenants would undoubtedly feel obliged to follow a captain's successor if he was related – the process restricted participation. In a poignant example in the 1820s, the lieutenant-colonel of the East Devon Legion offered a major a troop command with the promise that his nephew would succeed him on his resignation.<sup>47</sup> The Lieutenant-Colonel himself, John Kennaway, was the son of the honorary colonel of the same name, and Mark and William Kennaway served as a lieutenant and cornet respectively.<sup>48</sup> Other family connections in Devon between the 1820s and 1860s included three members of the Buller family (later to produce General Sir Redvers Buller) and Lord Courtenay and his son, whilst the Earl of Chester's Yeomanry could boast three members of the Egerton family in 1837, and in the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, three members of the Churchill family were serving.<sup>49</sup> The Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars and North Shropshire Yeomanry could perhaps be described as family institutions; the first due to the Churchills' involvement between 1818 and the First World War, and the second because it was in the hands of three generations of the Hawkstone family, the last serving a total of 61 years.<sup>50</sup> The economic future of many regiments was often inseparable from the hereditary nature of command. In what would often be a trade-off, the Yeomanry frequently chose to secure its future financially before it looked to experience and efficiency.

Though money was always the deciding factor in commissions, status also played a role. Of the 828 officers recorded in 1850, the Yeomanry could boast the patronage of five lords lieutenants, 111 deputy-lieutenants, 255 Justices of the Peace, 65 Members of Parliament, and 93 officers with some form of previous military experience. The significance of all five categories is not to be understated, but the proportion of county administrators and M.P.s provides a particularly telling story. The connection between the administration of law and order and the means of maintaining it are shown to be intimately bound, with the Royal Mid-Lothian Yeomanry able to muster 87 per cent of its officers from the ranks of the county's magistrates, whilst the Queen's Own West Kent Yeomanry achieved 67 per cent, and the Worcestershire Yeomanry 60 per cent. Although this was not the case in every

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<sup>47</sup> DRO, 3898Z/1. Letter John Kennaway to John Bere, 04/06/1823.

<sup>48</sup> DHC, D/DOY/A/7/4. List of the Officers of the Yeomanry Cavalry of Great Britain, 1837.

<sup>49</sup> DHC, D/DOY/A/7/4. List of the Officers of the Yeomanry Cavalry of Great Britain, 1837; and Sleight, *The Royal Militia and Yeomanry Cavalry Army List, 1850*.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*; and Wingfield, *Historical Record of the Shropshire Yeomanry Cavalry*, pp. 12-13.

regiment, nearly 31 per cent of the entire officer corps from cornet to colonel was also a magistrate. Furthermore, 14 per cent held even more authority as lord or deputy lieutenant, completing the bill of a party of order. In a sense the Yeomanry was the arm of the provincial establishment, controlling law and order as well as playing a role in patronage.<sup>51</sup>

Beyond these administrative titles, Yeomanry officers also sourced their influence from elsewhere. Gilks has shown that, in the late 1860s, 14 regiments were able to source 11 to 20 per cent of their officer corps from the aristocracy whilst a subsequent ten could not manage as much as ten per cent.<sup>52</sup> On the whole, these connections are not unusual. In 1795 15 per cent of the Yeomanry's officer corps held titles in the aristocracy and baronetcy. During the late 1830s just over nine per cent of the officer corps was found amongst the same group and, in 1850, nearly 12 per cent of officers stated a title within these categories. That this number does not include the children of titled men (at least those without courtesy titles) suggests the possibility of a larger association.<sup>53</sup> Gilks sought to show that the squirearchy was the backbone of the Yeomanry's officer corps, whilst the aristocracy failed to fully patronise the force to achieve, 'any permanent benefit'.<sup>54</sup> However, the squirearchy amounted to approximately 12,000 men as opposed to the 1,500 members of the peerage and baronetage.<sup>55</sup> Landed society contained more men on the bottom rung than it did at its pinnacle and, as might also be expected, this was reflected within the ranks of the Yeomanry cavalry. Between 1862 and 1867 more than 90 per cent of the Berkshire Yeomanry's officer corps was squires, whilst Oxfordshire returned 65 per cent and Warwickshire 50 per cent, yet all this really shows is the continuation of the connection between the land and the movement.<sup>56</sup> It is understandable that there was not uniform support from the moneyed and landed classes given the established nature of the Militia and other county institutions and responsibilities. Perhaps most significantly, with senior ranks at a premium, even high society was too large to be reflected in the officer corps in its entirety. Gilks's perception of the distance kept by

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<sup>51</sup> Sleigh, *The Royal Militia and Yeomanry Cavalry Army List, 1850*.

<sup>52</sup> Gilks, 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry, 1776-1908', p. 101.

<sup>53</sup> DHC, D/DOY/A/7/4. List of the Officers of the Yeomanry Cavalry of Great Britain, 1837; Sleigh, *The Royal Militia and Yeomanry Cavalry Army List, 1850*; and *List of the Officers of the...Corps and Troops of Gentlemen and Yeomanry* (War Office, 15/05/1795).

<sup>54</sup> Gilks, 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry, 1776-1908', p. 105.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p. 109.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p. 110.

the aristocracy might then be expected to have increased with the collapse of land prices from the 1870s, but the reality is far from being so simple. At the turn of the century, the force could still boast the patronage of 69 members of the aristocracy and 29 baronets: 15 per cent of the total.<sup>57</sup> Whilst the officer corps had shrunk as a total, influential patronage appears to have changed very little. What is more, these were figures that would hardly change between this date and 1914, where they stood at 71 and 25 respectively. Although the near doubling of the officer corps between 1900 and 1914 saw relative aristocratic participation fall to eight per cent, the continuity of the simple figures speaks of continued support. Though it may not have been a unanimous commitment, it seems that the extent of their benefaction altered very little over this 120 year period. Given the lack of field officers in the institution, it should not be surprising that lesser landholders made up the bulk of the force's officers.

Although there was continuity in the participation of titled society, it is clear that some regiments had difficulty in maintaining their officer corps at various points during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This might be the outcome of a particular event – the change of regulations in 1870 had just this effect – but it also seems that some officers were ground down by the public derision that became increasingly fierce from the 1850s. As a result of these sustained attacks some high profile patrons were driven to resign, such as the Earl of Dudley in Worcestershire in 1870.<sup>58</sup> Nonetheless, as has already been shown in the first chapter, in many cases the champions of the institution were in fact members of the same legislature and were in most cases more than capable of fighting their corner. Though incessant bickering in parliament and the opinions of the satirical press might have been enough for some men to turn away from the Yeomanry, there were more trying matters outside of the capital.

In the counties the problems were more complicated. Notwithstanding their ability to keep significant family names amongst their rank, the East Kent Yeomanry was one example left struggling to meet its officer establishment in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to the 1837 reductions the Lydd troop struggled to remain extant due to its declining numbers and the unreliability of its officers. After a period of uncertainty their captain resigned, ending the troop's existence.<sup>59</sup> The wider regimental leadership question came to a head in December 1844 when the regiment published an open

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<sup>57</sup> *The Times*, 16/08/1926.

<sup>58</sup> Though he actually remained as an honorary colonel. 'Q. L.' *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, p. 75.

<sup>59</sup> CKS, EKY/Z1. Letter: Captain Denne to Major Deedes, 16/07/1836.

letter entitled *To the Gentlemen of East Kent* in which the troop commanders expressed the crisis in officer numbers.<sup>60</sup> As a result of the 1837 reductions the regiment had been slashed to two troops, but it remained difficult for them to function, 'owing to the unwillingness from some cause or other of county gentlemen to come forward to fill the vacant commissions'.<sup>61</sup> Despite this plea, in 1850 they were still below establishment.<sup>62</sup>

Once more, these events were not only restricted to a single county or the middle of the century. As has already been shown, in the 1820s and 1830s there were times at which senior officers and lords lieutenant were forced to approach candidates, but this can also be seen in the earliest manifestations of the force. For example, rather than select from a waiting list of enthusiastic men, Earl Morton was forced to canvass for officers for his Dalmahoy troop in 1801.<sup>63</sup> Later, too, this problem had not subsided. The lieutenant-colonel of the Hertfordshire regiment complained to the Brownlow Committee in 1892 that there were simply not enough, 'eligible young men in the county'.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, in an earlier 1882 meeting, the colonel of the Ayrshire Yeomanry complained about his difficulty in finding suitable officers.<sup>65</sup> It is clear then that in many cases 'eligible' men of Yeomanry convention were in short supply. There were methods to get around this: short of officers before going into camp in 1884, the South Nottinghamshire Hussars drafted in Colonel C. G. Edwards and Lieutenant J. F. Laycock of the 2<sup>nd</sup> West Yorkshire Yeomanry to temporarily fill the gaps.<sup>66</sup> This, however, was obviously a flawed solution.

The most direct attempt to solve this officer problem came with Haldane's reforms in 1908. As well as his apparent desire to raise men from the ranks, the introduction of the Officer Training Corps' promised to tap schools and universities for potential candidates. As Haldane said in parliament, however, 'it is impossible to make the profession of officer lucrative'; unfortunately, it still remained impossible

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<sup>60</sup> CKS, EKY/Z1. Poster: *To the Gentlemen of East Kent*.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Sleight, *The Royal Militia and Yeomanry Cavalry Army List, 1850*.

<sup>63</sup> NAS, GD150/2366/37. Letter (draft): Earl Morton to Thomas Gloag esq., 23/09/1801.

<sup>64</sup> Brownlow Committee, 1892, p. 19.

<sup>65</sup> TNA, WO 32/7237. Proceedings of meetings to discuss state of Yeomanry Cavalry, 1882, p. 10; BPP: C. 3499, 1883: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1882; and BPP: C. 6860, 1893-94: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1892.

<sup>66</sup> Fellows, G. *History of the South Notts. Yeomanry Cavalry, 1794-1894*, (Forman, Nottingham, 1895), p. 84.



for officers to cover their costs.<sup>67</sup> This, it would seem, continued to interfere with Haldane's first objective, with only ten men commissioned from the ranks between 1908 and 1914. Although it is worth noting that a significant number of other ranks did gain commissions outside of the Yeomanry, only one man was commissioned within the old 'county' regiments. Of those remaining, half were from King Edward's Horse, whilst the others came from and went to London Yeomanry regiments. Though the examples are limited, this in its own right tells a story: other ranks of the London Yeomanry regiments were able to achieve promotion and transfer to a neighbouring regiment as junior officers, most likely due to the presence of relatively wealthy men in the ranks; outside of the capital this simply did not happen and those who sought promotion looked to other arms.

Table 2.2: Yeomanry Officers Commissioned Through the OTCs, 1908-1914<sup>68</sup>

| <u>Institution</u>        | <u>Number Returned</u> | <u>Percentage</u> |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| <u>Junior Division</u>    |                        |                   |
| Eton                      | 31                     | 21                |
| Harrow                    | 8                      | 5                 |
| Other (22 with 3 or less) | 36                     | 25                |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>75</b>              | <b>51</b>         |
| <u>Senior Division</u>    |                        |                   |
| Oxford                    | 36                     | 25                |
| Cambridge                 | 18                     | 12                |
| Inns of Court             | 13                     | 9                 |
| UC Reading                | 1                      | <1                |
| R. Ag. College            | 1                      | <1                |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>69</b>              | <b>48</b>         |
| Unknown OTC               | 2                      | 1                 |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>146</b>             | <b>100</b>        |

The Officer Training Corps has, on the whole, been labelled a failure.<sup>69</sup> This opinion aside, between 1908 and 1914 the Yeomanry did gain 146 officers through the scheme. As Table 2.2 shows, the junior division made up a little over half of the

<sup>67</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 03/06/1907. Vol. 175, Para. 295.

<sup>68</sup> Extracted from *London Gazette*.

<sup>69</sup> Spiers, E. M. 'The Regular Army' in Beckett, I.F.W. and Simpson, K. (eds.) *Nation in Arms* (MUP, 1985), p. 42.

Yeomanry's OTC candidates, more than 41 per cent coming from Eton alone. Harrow came in a low second place, followed by 22 other schools and colleges that produced three or fewer commissions each. In the senior contingent the story was to some extent similar. Oxford University OTC supplied more than half of the senior division's commissions, and a quarter of all the OTC entrants in the force. This was followed by not insignificant contributions from Cambridge University and the Inns of Court OTCs. That these three institutions should dominate in the senior division should not be surprising as they all unusually had cavalry components in their establishments. All the same, even without a comprehensive digest of the class and background of participants from both divisions, it can be assumed that such sources were fitting with requirements of Yeomanry officership. Not only did it cost a subscription to join the Oxford cavalry contingent, but social class and financial backing had already played a significant role in the education and occupation of all these candidates.<sup>70</sup>

With an officer corps of on average just over 1,100 men between 1908 and 1914, OTC candidates effectively made up a potential 13 per cent of the total. However, what makes for an interesting comparison are the 753 Old Etonians who fought in the First World War with some association to the officer corps of the Yeomanry Cavalry. There was clearly an established connection between the school and the force, most likely due to the backgrounds of those who attended. However, despite the fact that the Yeomanry managed an impressive doubling of its officer corps in the Edwardian period before the demands of war, it would seem that the OTCs did not play a dominant role in feeding this expansion.

Clearly this increase in size did not solely come from a previously uninterested stock of the landed gentry. Instead, wealthy benefactors from industry and business had begun to buy their way into the patronage circle linked to the Yeomanry before the turn of the century. In fact, the Queen's Own Royal Staffordshire Yeomanry has been shown to contain urban troops supported by modern capital from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Always one of the largest regiments, it contained three master-potters, a Liverpool Businessman, and the brewers Worthington and Bass before the 1820s.<sup>71</sup> Writing on the subject later, the latter believed he was only accepted in this clique

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<sup>70</sup> *Oxford University Handbook* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1912), p. 232.

<sup>71</sup> Hales, 'Civilian Soldiers in Staffordshire, 1793-1823', p. 204.

because he was generous with his money and kept a good pack of hounds.<sup>72</sup> Later palpable examples could be found amongst the Northumberland Hussars. William Watson-Armstrong – later Baron Armstrong and great-nephew of the notable industrialist – was initially commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup>-Lieutenant in 1889; the same year that he adopted the Armstrong name by royal license. He was made a captain in 1896 and later inherited the estates of his great-uncle in 1900. He was subsequently promoted to a majority in 1902, a year before he was ennobled. Armstrong's growing influence in the county was wielded through his business interests at the Armstrong, Whitworth & Co. Engineering Works and North Eastern Railway Company, but this was also reflected in his position in the Yeomanry.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, in 1913 another Tyne manufacturing magnate and future Lieutenant-Colonel, Philip Eustace Smith, was commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup>-Lieutenant. As a director of Smiths' Dock Company and British Ropes Ltd., Smith's interests were also wholly business related.<sup>74</sup> Comparably, in Yorkshire in the 1870s, the three 19<sup>th</sup> century regiments contained two 'iron masters' (Arthur C. Armitage and Herbert H. Taylor), two machinery manufacturers (Sir Andrew Fairbairn and Andrew Lawson), and a mill industrialist (Jonas Foster).<sup>75</sup> The latent anti-Semitism of 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain meant Jews were often excluded from county society, though as F. H. Cripps noted (and proved), from the middle of the century they could gain access to Buckinghamshire's influential groups by serving in the Yeomanry.<sup>76</sup> Here the eventual prevalence of Jewish financiers in the regiment gave rise to its sobriquet the 'Flying Foreskins', whilst the son of the eminently wealthy newspaper magnate Sir Edward Levy-Lawson became Lieutenant-Colonel and a number of generations of the Rothschild family also served.<sup>77</sup>

Buying into country society in this way is not a new concept. At any time in British history men of new money have often attempted to buy into the status and economic security of land.<sup>78</sup> Though there has been considerable debate regarding the success and extent of this movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – not least because of the

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 206.

<sup>73</sup> *The Times*, 28/12/1900 & 17/10/1941; and *The North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 27/12/1900.

<sup>74</sup> *The Times*, 18/03/1936.

<sup>75</sup> Baines, T. *Yorkshire Past and Present, Vol. II.* (William Mackenzie, London, 1870), pp. 194-195; and *Army List*, 1876.

<sup>76</sup> Cripps, F. H. *Life's a Gamble* (Odhams Press, London, 1957), p. 64.

<sup>77</sup> Beckett *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 189; and Endelman, T. M. *The Jews of Britain, 1656 to 2000* (UCP, 2002), pp. 155-156.

<sup>78</sup> Rubinstein, W. D. 'New Men of Wealth and the Purchase of Land in Nineteenth-Century Britain' *Past & Present*, No. 92, 1981, p. 91.

uncertain value of landed assets after 1870 – it is clear that there was some change in the structure of landed society.<sup>79</sup> For example, Pumphrey has shown that an increasing number of new peers in the 1880s came from outside the ranks of the gentry or nobility.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, although the likes of Nicholas and Smith have debated acreages and the proportion of wealth held in land, it is agreed that a position in the country was ideal for those, ‘who sought political standing, prestige, amenity, or an investment opportunity from their property’.<sup>81</sup> For those with less to spend, ‘mini-estates’ in areas without resident estate owners could still provide the influential position of squire.<sup>82</sup> As Clark has suggested, the ownership of land was not only telling of your wealth, but also opened the door to social and political positions such as magistrate, high sheriff, lord lieutenant, and membership of Parliament.<sup>83</sup> It would seem that Yeomanry officership also deserves a place in this list.

Though Pumphrey’s numbers are small, the examples indicate the recognition of the position of industrial and business money.<sup>84</sup> Most interesting amongst Pumphrey’s 47 ‘new money’ peerages, however, were the number who sought Yeomanry officership. Barons Knaresborough, Ashcombe, and a son of both Barons Hindlip and Joicey, alongside Viscount Ridley and Earl Egerton, all obtained Yeomanry commissions before or after being ennobled or rising in the ranks of nobility between 1886 and 1905.<sup>85</sup> As has already been mentioned, acceptance in military institutions was one potential step in social climbing, with service reflecting an individual’s philanthropic and dutiful nature.<sup>86</sup> Given the evident crossover with county administration amongst Yeomanry officers, it might also be seen as a stepping stone towards the positions of magistrate or deputy lieutenant. Lord Guernsey, for example, cemented his position in society by obtaining a deputy lieutenancy shortly after his promotion to major.<sup>87</sup> For others the two were essentially one and the same. Such was the case in Oxfordshire in the early 1850s when Lord Saye and Sele wrote

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<sup>79</sup> For an overview of this historiography see: Nicholas, T. ‘Businessmen and Land Ownership in the Late Nineteenth Century Revisited’ *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 53, No. 4, 2000, pp. 777-782.

<sup>80</sup> Pumphrey, R.E. ‘The Introduction of Industrialists into the British Peerage: A Study in Adaptation of a Social Institution.’ *American Historical Review*, Vol. LXV, No. 1, 1959, p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> Nicholas, ‘Businessmen and Land ownership’, p. 782.

<sup>82</sup> Habakkuk, H. J. *Marriage, Debt, and the Estates System: English Landownership 1650–1950* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1994), pp. 403 & 613.

<sup>83</sup> Clark, G. ‘Land Hunger: Land as a Commodity and as a Status Good, England, 1500–1910’. *Explorations in Economic History*, No. 35, 1998, p. 61.

<sup>84</sup> Pumphrey, R.E. ‘The Introduction of Industrialists into the British Peerage’, p. 9.

<sup>85</sup> *The Times*, 18/03/1909; and *The Army List*.

<sup>86</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, pp. 94-96.

<sup>87</sup> Dated 03/09/1852. *London Gazette*, 28/09/1852.

to the lord lieutenant to secure a deputy lieutenancy and commission for his son when he left Oxford University.<sup>88</sup> In truth, however, the majority of Pumphrey's new peers did not obtain positions in the Yeomanry. Unfortunately it is very difficult to decipher what forces were at play, though with evidence of men in similar positions sending their sons for commissions, it is entirely possible that they considered themselves too old. Whilst having a son take a commission at the lowest rank would be socially acceptable, the same might not be said of a man more advanced in his years and already making inroads to county society through ennoblement. More significantly, however, this still says little about those who purchased land without the prestige of a peerage or those who did not invest in land at all.

The difficulty in identifying the *nouveau riche* in the Yeomanry comes from the difficulty in sourcing biographical information on the junior ranks. Nonetheless, the most dramatic comparison between 'new' and 'old' money was found in the Lanarkshire Regiments in Scotland: one centred on the city of Glasgow, the other on the upper part of the county of Lanarkshire. Serving with the city regiment were Andrew Coats, Sir Robert King Stewart, and Herbert Robin Cayzer; the first was the son of a thread manufacturer, the second had interests in banking and business, and the third was the son of a self-made shipping magnate and M.P.<sup>89</sup> By way of comparison, the 'county' Lanarkshire regiment contained Sir Edward Johnson-Ferguson, Bt., Sir S. M. Lockhart, Bt., Lord Dunglass, Lord Lamington, and Earl Home as Honorary Colonel.<sup>90</sup> It is interesting to note that in 1852 the then Lord Dunglass (later Earl Home) switched his allegiance between the two regiments just three years after the city corps had been formed. Although it is impossible to conclusively explain why, it should be noted that the Lanarkshire regiment had existed for some 29 years before its city counterpart. Whether or not Dunglass was tempted by precedence or the influential company is hard to say. It is, however, quite possible that the county corps did not have space within its ranks at the time.

Outside of Lanarkshire such comparisons are not particularly enlightening given that the most dramatic change did not take place until the turn of the century. Nonetheless, in considering the number who sought social elevation in established corps it is worth considering the following: society was slowly changing with the

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<sup>88</sup> ORO, LM VII/ii/1. Letter: Lord Saye and Sele to Duke of Marlborough, 29/05/1852.

<sup>89</sup> *The Times*, 18/02/1930; 22/12/1930; and 18/03/1958.

<sup>90</sup> *The Times*, 29/12/1953; and *The Army List* 1896-1906.

declining power of the landed elite and the change in physical representations of wealth. Handsome though an estate might be, it should be remembered that businessmen accumulated their riches through the shrewd handling of assets and land was simply no longer as profitable as it was during the high farming period between the 1830s and 1870s. Given the complaints made later in the century regarding the lack of suitable gentlemen, it is likely that some potential 'business' officers were unwilling or unable to commit themselves to estates and positions of influence due to broader interests. As a result, their presence was unlikely to fit seamlessly within those regiments that remained wedded to hierarchy and deference. For those who committed more and assumed positions amongst the untitled landed gentry, the rewards of social integration were there for the taking.

The end of the century had not only brought social mobility, but also colonial conflict. The result of the latter was far more wide ranging. The expansion of the Yeomanry nationally gave birth to four London regiments amongst other urban units that would remain on the strength permanently. These alone exhibit the most substantial change in the order and social arrangement of the force, but it should not be assumed that the doubling of officer strength through the turn of the century did not have effects on the institution as a whole. Although they may not have been gentlemen in the landed tradition, many officers of these new regiments were ex-regulars. In 1914 there were 57 ex-professional soldiers in the Yeomanry, 42 of whom had come from cavalry regiments. Furthermore, the London regiments alone could claim 18 and, given the lack of modern volunteering in Ireland outside of the militia, the North and South Irish Horse relied on 20 former regulars for leadership.<sup>91</sup> Those who could not boast regular experience could often substitute wealth. Significant figures in the Westminster Dragoons before the First World War, for example, included Oswald Magniac, a banker; Percy Illingworth, a politician of manufacturing stock; and Philip Henderson, a distinguished engineer. Similarly, the City of London Rough Riders had the ex-regular and African entrepreneur Charles Hyde Villiers, as well as the businessman Thomas Polson amongst their rank. The Sharpshooters could then claim W. B. Incedon-Webber, a barrister of Gray's Inn; and Reginald Tuck, a managing director of the fine art publisher Raphael Tuck.<sup>92</sup> Outside of London it had

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<sup>91</sup> Extracted from *Army List*, August 1914.

<sup>92</sup> *The Times*, 04/01/1915; 10/11/1938; 25/03/1939; 13/04/1939; 23/08/1946; 24/05/1947; and 13/05/1954

also become difficult for some county regiments to rely solely on the stereotyped historic sources for leadership. The Oxfordshire Hussars could count amongst their officers in 1914 a cloth manufacturer, two M.P.s, a stockbroker, a solicitor, a barrister, a civil servant, a banker, and an Oxford don. Similarly, the Northumberland Hussars, apart from the already mentioned Tyne shipping magnates, had the services of a chairman of Coutts and Co. and the National Provincial bank; and the director of Yorkshire Amalgamated Collieries and chairman of the Wearmouth Coal Company.<sup>93</sup>

Though there was not necessarily continuity in the unofficial property requirements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Yeomanry, there was continuity in other areas. As such it remains impossible to ignore the nexus of wealth and status in the officer corps of the Yeomanry. Whilst the nature of wealth had undeniably changed in some circumstances, its straightforward importance had not. Status was something that the institution could impart through association and the established presence of the aristocracy and other social heavyweights made membership a doorway to provincial and high society. Though they were far from making up the majority, it is clear that men of business had embraced established 19<sup>th</sup> century in-roads into the Yeomanry and had since expanded their foothold in the force. This is all the more obvious in the new urban regiments born in the Edwardian age. Though this was genuine change, it is still worth noting the comments made to the Brownlow Committee of 1892: 'many men who would make most valuable Yeomanry officers will not join because they say they cannot afford it'.<sup>94</sup> This was not to change before the First World War.

Motivations to serve undoubtedly varied a great deal, though what seems central – particularly after the 1850s – is the importance of pomp and pageantry. Amongst the most notable of Yeomanry responsibilities was providing escorts. This could be for prisoners, magistrates, or sensitive cargoes, but most impressive was the responsibility of looking after dignitaries. Significantly, this was not a rarity: in Dorset the county's Yeomanry escorted the Duchess of Kent and Princess Victoria in 1833; Queen Adelaide in 1842; the Duke of Cambridge in 1887; the Prince of Wales in 1884, 1887, and twice in 1890; and the Duke of Connaught in 1892.<sup>95</sup> In 1889 the Northumberland Hussars escorted the Shah of Persia on a visit to Craggside, in 1897 they accompanied the King of Siam to Taplow Court, and in July 1906 they rode with

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<sup>93</sup> Keith-Falconer, A. *The Oxfordshire Hussars in the Great War* (John Murray, London, 1922), p. 25; *The Times*, 02/10/ 1951; and 19/09/1952.

<sup>94</sup> Brownlow Committee, 1892, p. 41.

<sup>95</sup> Thompson, *Records of the Dorset Yeomanry*, pp. 128, 133,152, 158, 159, 168, 172, & 177.

King Edward VII to open a bridge in Newcastle.<sup>96</sup> In 1843 the South Nottinghamshire Yeomanry formed part of the escort for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert as they passed through the county and in 1893 furnished an escort for the Duke of Cambridge on his way to Nottingham.<sup>97</sup> In 1832 the Uttoxeter troop of Staffordshire Yeomanry rode with the royal party of the Duchess of Kent and Princess Victoria and in 1844 the regiment organised a section to escort the Duke of Cambridge from the railway station to Alton Towers.<sup>98</sup> For those counties that stood between London and the ports this was a particularly frequent duty. The West Kent Yeomanry, for instance, escorted King William IV in 1821 and 1836, Queen Victoria in 1858 and 1864, the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1866 and 1898, King Edward VII in 1905, and the Queen of Spain in 1906.<sup>99</sup> Although in 1888 Queen Victoria declined an escort from the Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars – apparently due to, ‘her objections to the indifferent horsemanship’ – it is clear that she had not always held this view and the service continued to be utilised by future monarchs.<sup>100</sup> Escorting the reigning monarch or other dignitary was cherished by regiments and often resulted in ‘royal’ prefixes to titles. As a matter of course, these parties also guaranteed significant audiences which, in turn, guaranteed public exposure.

Public exposure served a number of purposes, but more than anything it provided an opportunity to cement an individual’s position in county society. Uniforms visually aided this exposure and, apart from being expensive, were also extravagant and kept style with regular patterns. More importantly still, unlike the Rifle Volunteers they appear to have been worn without prejudice at civic occasions and even in parliament into the 1920s.<sup>101</sup> For much the same purposes, entertainments and luxuries were rarely in short supply at camp. At the permanent duty of the Royal 1<sup>st</sup> Devon Yeomanry in 1862, for example, Lieutenant-Colonel James Wentworth Buller stated in a letter home that he hoped, ‘there is no want of attendance at Downes

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<sup>96</sup> Pease, *The History of the Northumberland (Hussars) Yeomanry*, pp. 60 & 65; and *The Yeomanry Record – An Illustrated Paper Devoted Entirely to the Interests of the Yeomanry*. No. 15, September 1897.

<sup>97</sup> Fellows, *History of the South Notts. Yeomanry Cavalry, 1794*, pp. 42 & 128-129.

<sup>98</sup> SRO, D5982/2/4. Letter: Major George Jerome to Major Majendie, 23/08/1844; & Webster, *The Records of the Queen’s Own Royal Regiment of Staffordshire Yeomanry*, p. 90.

<sup>99</sup> Edmeades, Lieutenant-Colonel J. F. *West Kent (Queen’s Own) Yeomanry – Some Historical Records, 1794-1909* (Melrose, London, 1909), pp. 29, 40, 64, 67, 68, & 117.

<sup>100</sup> Rothschild, D. de *The Rothschilds at Waddesdon Manor* (Collins, London, 1979), p. 47.

<sup>101</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, 21/01/1886. Vol. 302, Para. 45; *The Times*, 04/02/1859, 07/02/1911, & 11/02/1920; and Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, p. 96



[House], [given] that all the servants are here.’<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, beyond the unavoidable official responsibilities, it is clear that the institution also served as a wider social hub for provincial society. For example, in 1821 Lord Grantham of the Yorkshire Hussars created great excitement in Doncaster when he provided a ladies ball at the Mansion House to run alongside his regiment’s annual camp.<sup>103</sup> At the other end of the century in January 1891, the Staffordshire Yeomanry’s annual ball entertained the mayor, councillors, barristers, and the leading families of the district, showing Yeomanry entertainments did not only prevail around the time of camp.<sup>104</sup> In other regiments the social calendar was even busier, such as the East Kent Mounted Rifles who between November 1902 and March 1903 were involved with ten such balls and dances.<sup>105</sup> It is clear that the Yeomanry fostered a distinct social environment that, when at its strongest, was a powerful force in steering the social calendar of the locally wealthy and powerful. Always seeking the approval and patronage of high society if they could not provide the weight themselves, on so many levels there was cross-over between other established conventions and institutions.<sup>106</sup>

Once again highlighting the extravagance of these events is personal cost. Despite occasional attempts to remonstrate within the houses of parliament that economy and restraint was always exercised by regiments, the 1912 officers mess account book of the West Kent Yeomanry suggests a different story. Over the fourteen days of training, Captain A. R. H. Rycroft spent some £11.14s.9d on alcohol and cigars, with Major Sir Samuel Scott coming a close second at £8 6s 5d.<sup>107</sup> Although Lord Dudley had once insisted that no champagne would be served in his mess as a commitment to frugality, it seems a combination of whiskey, beer, and liqueur brandy could still produce a comparably sizeable invoice elsewhere.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, Ian Beckett has used the example of the Oxfordshire Hussars officers, Winston Churchill and F. E. Smith, who between them lost £1,000 playing the card game *chemin de fer* during an annual camp; despite Churchill’s reputation for living beyond his means, such extravagances highlight the high stakes that officership could

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<sup>102</sup> DRO, 2065M/C1/19. Letter: Lieutenant -Colonel J. W. Buller to ‘G’, 16/05/1862.

<sup>103</sup> *John Bull*, 28/05/1821.

<sup>104</sup> *The Dart*, 30/01/1891.

<sup>105</sup> CCA, CC-W/13/3. Diary: F. S. Maxted, 1902-1920.

<sup>106</sup> The Warwickshire Yeomanry asked Earl Warwick to ‘patronise’ their ball in the 1890s. WRO, CR1886/Box835/113. Letter: Lewis Goold to Earl Warwick. 21/11/1890.

<sup>107</sup> CKS, U269/O299/8. West Kent Yeomanry Officers Mess Accounts, Arundel, West Sussex. 1911 and 1912.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*; and ‘Q. L.’ *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, p. 70.

impose.<sup>109</sup> There was clearly pressure to conform and display wealth on these occasions, but it should be viewed as a social institution formed from clubbable individuals of similar backgrounds. Whilst London provided endless venues tailored to political leanings and pastimes, the Yeomanry could provide similar surroundings in the provinces.

Often seeing themselves as the embodiment of the archetypal gentleman sportsman, Yeomanry officers were aspiring towards building, or maintaining an image. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century sporting journals such as *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, *The Racing Times*, *Horse and Hound*, and *The Sporting Gazette* regularly reported on the Yeomanry races, point-to-point, and hunt meetings, covering the dash and bravery of fast paced country sports. This combined with the conspicuous uniforms added up to a local and national presence where an individual's exploits in the field in red or regimentals were disseminated through influential circles in the capital and provinces. Described as, 'one of the sturdiest props of the landed interest', it is not surprising that hunting was inextricably linked with the Yeomanry from its very beginnings.<sup>110</sup> Gee has shown that 'French principles' aimed to abolish hunting rights and the Game Laws, perhaps motivating some potential yeomen to join.<sup>111</sup> As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, however, this link became more pronounced and also opened up participation.

The improving rail network gave those who could not afford to stop for the hunting season access to the shire counties, whilst 'carted deer' packs like those of the Rothschilds meant guaranteed sport in easy reach of London. Having always boasted its 'openness', the hunting field was the ideal access point to the great and the good without the expense of buying land; better still, unlike shooting, this sacrosanct 'openness' meant a day-tripper would rarely part with any money for his sport beyond travel.<sup>112</sup> By the 1860s it was suggested that hunting and Yeomanry service were one and the same, something perfectly demonstrated by the Royal West Kent Yeomanry's

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<sup>109</sup> D'Este, C. *Warlord: A Life of Winston Churchill at War, 1874-1945* (Harper Collins, New York, 2008), p. 55.

<sup>110</sup> Holderness, B. A. 'The Victorian Farmer' in Mingay, G. F. (ed.) *The Victorian Countryside Vol. II*, p. 21.

<sup>111</sup> Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement*, pp. 160-161.

<sup>112</sup> A 'carted deer' was semi-tame and transported to the hunting field. The hounds were trained not to harm the creature. Though frowned upon by the elite hunting community, it produced guaranteed sport. Itzkowitz, D. *Peculiar Privilege: A Social History of English Foxhunting, 1753-1885* (Harvester Press, Sussex, 1977), pp. 39, 58 & 61.

pack of drag hounds and structure of the reformed Essex Yeomanry in 1902.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, countless hunts spoke about their Yeomanry contingents and the cross-over between the two institutions, especially during wartime.<sup>114</sup> Hunting has been seen as a method of confirming the country gentleman's proximity to nature and as a unifying force within a local population. They offered colour and entertained in districts often devoid of spectacle, and crowds of all classes eagerly awaited local meetings. By riding with local packs or keeping up their own, there is little doubt that the Yeomanry also supported employment directly and indirectly, but more than anything this relationship helped to underline and enhance the class alliance exhibited within the Yeomanry.<sup>115</sup> To add further weight to arguments of social climbing, Howkins has described how eligible gentlemen of business and other backgrounds saw hunting as a purchasable aspect of 'rural Englishness'. As such it is probable that many would have crossed the blurred boundary to the Yeomanry for the same reasons.<sup>116</sup> Although it has been said that hunting was not as socially or geographically elite as game shooting, the sport obviously tied seamlessly with Yeomanry interests.<sup>117</sup>

To some the hunt was, 'the grand nucleus of society', and the same might be said of the Yeomanry.<sup>118</sup> Hunting and Yeomanry functions kept the powerful in the counties, but also allowed the aspirational the opportunity of an introduction. The corporate identity formed through uniform and regulation was shared through collective experience and instantly offered a participant at some level collective acceptance. With examples of officers from less traditional financial backgrounds increasing and with purely urban corps coming into fruition at the turn of the century, it seems membership still held social influence and offered access to otherwise closed social networks.

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<sup>113</sup> Re-raised in 1902, 'A' Squadron (Colchester – Essex and Suffolk Hunt); 'B' (Braintree – East Essex Hunt); 'C' (Epping – Essex Hunt); and 'D' (Southend – Essex Union Hunt). Robertson, A. F. F. H. 'The army in Colchester and its influence on the social, economic, and political development of the town, 1854-1914.' (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Essex, 1991), p. 261; and Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege*, p. 105; and *The Standard*, 20/01/1892.

<sup>114</sup> *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 18/11/1860 & 03/10/1863; Yerburgh, H. Beauchamp. *Leaves from a Hunting Diary in Essex- Vol. I* (Vinton, London, 1900), pp. 272 & 287-290; Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 436; and Sassoon, S. *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (Faber & Faber, London, 1929), pp. 105-106, 179, 215 & 232.

<sup>115</sup> Itzkowitz, *Peculiar Privilege*, p. 100-101; and Heley, J. 'Rurality, Class, Aspiration and the Emergence of the New Squirearchy' (Ph.D. Thesis, Aberystwyth University, 2008), p. 198.

<sup>116</sup> Howkins, A. *Reshaping Rural England – A Social History, 1850-1926* (Harper Collins, London, 1991), p. 242.

<sup>117</sup> Mingay, G. E. *The gentry: the rise and fall of a ruling class* (Longman, London, 1976), p. 181.

<sup>118</sup> Surtees, R. S. *Mr. Facey Romford's Hounds* (Bradbury, London, 1865), p. 81.

By carefully vetting its officers the Yeomanry was limiting its pool of recruits. The suitability and efficiency of these officers would become a significant issue during the two wars of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; this, however, is not to say that their abilities had not been questioned earlier. Given the difficulties in securing men it should not be surprising that questions were asked of the availability of the leadership. For example, in 1875 the Inspecting Officer for 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry District stated that one of the significant issues faced in regimental efficiency was troop leadership. Given the importance of an officer's influence, it was imperative that they should be present to prepare for the annual camp or for more pressing and serious circumstances. The uncomfortable reality outlined by the officer was that a great number of subalterns were not resident, either living outside the county or, in some cases, outside the country.<sup>119</sup> In some cases those in question were influential men and how Walter Long was able to balance a ministerial post, the duties of an M.P., and the lieutenant-colonelcy of the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry is bewildering.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, Winston Churchill served as a Major and a squadron commander in the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars between 1905 and 1914 whilst also serving as Home Secretary and then First Lord of the Admiralty. Though his correspondence shows frequent communication and a fondness for annual camp, he nonetheless sacrificed his pay in 1908 when parliamentary duties stopped him from attending. With camps typically held at Blenheim, his wife also had doubts about the balance of military and social activities that he indulged in.<sup>121</sup> Other gentlemen, typically spending much of the spring and summer in London for the season, were also unavailable, as were a good number who were also in town for the parliamentary sessions in both houses.<sup>122</sup>

The result of these split loyalties was the transfer of responsibility to adjutants and permanent staff. Without the regular presence of an officer it was often subsequently reported that attendance at troop drills was reduced.<sup>123</sup> Though this was identified as a significant issue in the 1870s, it is clear that little changed after 1900. The reliance on wealthy officers often produced a clash of priorities for those with

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<sup>119</sup> For example, one officer was said to reside in Ireland, yet belonged to an English regiment. Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 90.

<sup>120</sup> Long held the colonelcy between 1898 and 1906. He was MP for Bristol South between 1900 and 1906 as well as President of the Board of Local Government between 1900 and 1905 and Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1905.

<sup>121</sup> See *Army List*; CAC, CHAR 1/83/9. Letter: Lord Wyfold to Winston Churchill, 05/11/1908; and Jenkins, R. *Churchill* (Pan Macmillan, London, 2002) p. 203.

<sup>122</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 93.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, p. 90

split interests. Furthermore, others who had little extra to spend would have found difficulty in moving to a more convenient locality. As late as 1910 Cuthbert Headlam not only found the financial commitment trying, but also noted:

If the Yeomanry are to be of any good, the officers must be men who can afford to give plenty of time to their duties...One ought to live near the...headquarters of the Troop and drill continually with one's men get to know them...of course this is out of the question for me, for even if I had the time, I could not afford to be trotting down to Huntingdon continually.<sup>124</sup>

When the motivations behind service shifted from invasion and insurrection it should not be surprising that some officers were not locals driven by local interests. Once more, however, this issue was not a product of a neglected and ramshackle institution left to its own devices whilst the world around it changed; on the contrary, they had been part of Yeomanry service since its inception. Major J. C. Smith, late of service with the Sicilian Regiment, wrote in 1817 a treatise titled: *Observations for the Improvement of the Yeomanry Cavalry, Together with the Remarks That Have Given Rise to Them*. In this Smith stated that officers tended to be both too old and too distant from their troops to play any real part in assisting them should they be called out and suggested that no officer should reside more than ten miles from his troop headquarters; more than 90 years later it seems these recommendations had still not been fully realised.<sup>125</sup>

As might be expected with a national force, there were exceptions to this rule. In Devon efforts were made to refuse commissions under circumstances such as these. For example, in the 1820s, Colonel Sir John Kennaway refused to gazette one candidate because his main residence was in Guernsey.<sup>126</sup> Others were also willing to take positive action later. In 1866 Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Bagot of the Queen's Own Royal Staffordshire Yeomanry demanded the resignation of one of his officers for his absence from the county and subsequent neglect of his troop. Also bluntly ordered to settle his mess bill, the officer in question was told that his 'remaining in the

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<sup>124</sup> Beach, *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam*, p. 22.

<sup>125</sup> TNA, HO 44/47. *Observations for the Improvement of the Yeomanry Cavalry, Together with the Remarks That Have Given Rise to Them*.

<sup>126</sup> DRO, 961M-0/O/4/3. Letter: Colonel Sir John Kennaway to Browne, 08/10/1821.

reg[iment] prevent[ed] the appointment of an efficient officer'. Just six years later Bagot adopted the same course with another officer who was moving from the county, not allowing him to remain on the strength of the regiment.<sup>127</sup> Similar experiences were had in the West Yorkshire Yeomanry, where Sir Henry Edwards 'gazetted out' one officer from his regiment when he excused himself from permanent duty for similar reasons over three consecutive years in the 1870s.<sup>128</sup>

Although some commanding officers – such as Colonel the Earl of Clarendon – declined offers if they did not know candidates personally, others were content to commission men directly to the rank of captain. Local conditions and interests were allowed to determine what attributes were most important and this was something backed up by official doctrine.<sup>129</sup> As a result, some resisted ex-cavalry officers in the belief that their purpose of joining was to rub shoulders with the great and the good. Not commanding the respect of the local population, it was argued that such men were not suitable for the Yeomanry despite their professional experience.<sup>130</sup> Notwithstanding this apparent prejudice, however, it should be noted that it was not particularly widespread: more than 23 per cent of officers in 1876 were ex-regular army officers of some kind, a figure that remained at 14 per cent in 1914.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, in light of Spiers's comments on the need for a private income in cavalry regiments, it seems unlikely that these men were simple social climbers. Nonetheless, with conditions conducive to incompetency as they were, it is astonishing that prior to 1875 there was no mandatory formal training. Despite a push to see this introduced in the 1870s, only 23 per cent of serving officers had gained proficiency certificates in 1914.<sup>132</sup> Major-General Lord Chesham had spoken of the poor quality of Yeomanry officers in South Africa to the 1904 Elgin Commission,

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<sup>127</sup> SRO, D1300/2/1. Letter: P. C. G. W. Adj. to Lieutenant Spry, 13/01/1866; and Letter: Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Bagot to SSW, 24/06/1872.

<sup>128</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 190.

<sup>129</sup> Brownlow Committee, 1892, pp. 19 and 89; and *Army Regulations Vol. X – Regulations for the Yeomanry Cavalry* (HMSO, 1885), pp. 10-11.

<sup>130</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 90.

<sup>131</sup> 187 men out of 799 in 1876, and 172 men out of 1,228 in 1914. extracted from *Army List* for 1876 and 1914.

<sup>132</sup> From 1874 the School of Auxiliary Cavalry at Aldershot catered for Yeomanry officers and permanent staff to learn the rudiments of their drill and duties in an examined four week course. Although it was closed in 1897 (A.O. 196), it reopened in 1901 as the School for Imperial Yeomanry, the duties later taken over from 1910 by the cavalry depots. Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 218; Harris Committee, 1901, p. 10; *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 08/03/1910. Vol. 14, Para. 1412; and *Army List* 1914.

stating that they did not have the time, experience, or materials to become efficient.<sup>133</sup> Following a similar line of argument, Major-General J. P. Brabazon went a step further, telling the committee he would have had only regular officers on the veldt had it been feasible.<sup>134</sup> Further examples of this lack of faith in the leadership can be found in the new mounted brigades in 1908, only five of which were under the command of yeomen, only two of whom had no regular experience. Without a defined role, more financial aid, or the demand for professional efficiency, very little could have changed before the First World War. Lumped with a largely ambiguous role between 1902 and 1914, Yeomanry officers were not much more prepared for war than they had been in 1899. They were not wholly responsible, but nor did they seize the initiative – as many would in 1920 – by showing determination to modernise and professionalise.

One final, yet particularly neglected, aspect of the Yeomanry officer corps is the position of the adjutancy. Training and administrative tasks within a corps were controlled by permanent staff NCOs working under an adjutant, a man with at least four years regular military experience as an officer or senior NCO. As there is not a vast collection of memoirs concerning ex-adjutants it is difficult to single out the attractions of the position. Nonetheless, with two prominent names taken into the force – Sir John French and Adrian Carton de Wiart – there is some need to identify what the role encompassed and how it was sold. Though recollections of experience are rare and ultimately hard to compare, the biographies of these soldiers do offer some insights into this world.

One of Field Marshal Sir John French's biographers has described his time with the Northumberland Hussars between 1881 and 1884 as unhappy. Lumbered with the 'odious task' of administering the regiment's personnel, it is said that he found the atmosphere largely monotonous. Worse still, it was his adjutancy that kept him from his regiment when it went campaigning in Egypt in 1882.<sup>135</sup> Both Richard Holmes and the Northumberland Hussars, however, looked upon the time more fondly. Not only did the service provide greater stability and security than his previous posting to Ireland, but he is said to have fitted in well amongst the 'sportsmen' of the regiment, formed lasting friendships in the county, and, 'enjoyed a

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<sup>133</sup> *BPP*: C. 1790, 1904: Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I, pp. 290-291.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, p. 295.

<sup>135</sup> Cassar, George H. *The Tragedy of Sir John French* (Associated University Presses, London, 1985), pp. 21-22 & 24.

full social life'; it is even suggested that his later regard for the Territorials owed much to his Yeomanry adjutancy.<sup>136</sup> Though the regimental reflections may have been associated with the lofty heights of his later career, it also suggests French's feelings towards his duties were not quite as cold as Cassar has made out. As the regiment remembered, 'old members of the corps...recall the keenness and enthusiasm with which this officer discharged his duties', and there was certainly no resistance on his part to their early service on the Western Front.<sup>137</sup> Whatever he or others might have thought about avoiding the dangers of campaigning, it did not adversely affect French's promotional prospects, as he achieved the rank of major in 1883 whilst still serving as a Yeomanry adjutant.

Lieutenant-General Adrian Carton de Wiart had had his first taste of war with the Yeomanry in South Africa after leaving Oxford University to join Paget's Horse.<sup>138</sup> In 1908 Carton de Wiart – now a professional soldier with the 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards – met Colonel Robert P. Sandeman of the Gloucestershire Hussars, who offered him the adjutancy in his regiment, something he took up in 1910. Given that the two met on a hunting trip in Germany, it is clear that they both had interests in common and that there was promise that such interests would be indulged in the future. Though he was undeniably a fighting man, Carton de Wiart was also a very keen sportsman and rider and his view on an adjutancy was quite different to the one described by Cassar. Whilst he was reluctant to commit himself to service in England, he knew the life of a Yeomanry adjutant was, 'an enviable lot and renownedly pleasant both militarily and socially'.<sup>139</sup> Gloucestershire being hunting country also helped encourage him. The work actually undertaken by Carton de Wiart during training appears to have been vigorous and his comments on the regiment complimentary, but it is clear that the attraction of the position was social. Camp evenings were described as 'hilarious and rowdy' and it is clear that he fully indulged in the hunting season. However, perhaps the most telling attraction of Carton de Wiart's adjutancy in the Gloucester Hussars was the lack of input required in wider regimental affairs. When there was no sport to be had, he noted, 'I conducted my adjutancy from the Continent by a correspondence course. I had all the papers sent out

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<sup>136</sup> Holmes, R. *The Little Field Marshal – A Life of Sir John French*, (Cape, London, 1981), p. 29.

<sup>137</sup> Pease, H. *The History of the Northumberland (Hussars) Yeomanry, 1819-1919* (Constable, London, 1924), p. 19.

<sup>138</sup> Carton De Wiart, Sir A. *Happy Odyssey* (Pen & Sword, 2007), p. 17.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, p. 43.



to me to sign and return, and occasionally and regretfully resorted to the expense of a wire.' Though he would attribute this to the efficiency of the regiment, the less than strenuous nature of the task was universal to the arm.<sup>140</sup>

Although these examples outline the careers of two successful professional soldiers, it is unclear whether the experience opened doors for them. It also remains unclear what had originally attracted French to the Yeomanry, but his promotional path within and outside the adjutancy was rapid and continued to be so afterwards. For Carton de Wiart sport was clearly a prominent attraction and, though sentimental in his memoirs, he did not reflect on his early departure in 1914 to join the Somaliland Camel Corps when his father's allowance dried up. Whatever the motivation, the position itself appears to have been coveted. It was noted by the inspecting officer of auxiliary cavalry for the First Cavalry District in 1875 that, 'there are already numerous officers, too many, who wish to obtain [adjutant] appointments now, and who are not fit for them'.<sup>141</sup> Similarly, in 1907 the East Riding Yeomanry's adjutancy was hotly contested, the eventual winner having turned down two other corps in hope of gaining the appointment.<sup>142</sup> Included in Cardwell's 1871 reforms was a clause that said Yeomanry adjutants would in future come directly from cavalry regiments in the form of full or half-pay officers who would be restricted to a five year term.<sup>143</sup> Prior to this, however, it is clear that the appointment was lifelong, often associated with an individual's retirement be they an officer or senior NCO.<sup>144</sup> The regulation allowing for senior NCOs of the line to retire to an adjutancy in the Yeomanry was clearly an attractive prospect when pensions were not overly generous. As a result, these appointments could make men reliant on the regiment as a home. In the Hampshire Carabiners, for example, one 19<sup>th</sup> century adjutant died in his post at the age of 71. Similarly, the Staffordshire Yeomanry had only five adjutants between 1798 and 1870, two dying in the appointment and another serving for 36 years.<sup>145</sup> Elsewhere the situation was less stagnant – the South Nottinghamshire Hussars had ten adjutants

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<sup>140</sup> Carton De Wiart, *Happy Odyssey*, p. 43; and Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 71.

<sup>141</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 34.

<sup>142</sup> LMA, ACC 1360/781/1-39. Stracey-Clitherow Papers.

<sup>143</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 13/06/1878. Vol. 240, Para. 1447-1448.

<sup>144</sup> A sergeant-major of the regulars, embodied militia, fencibles or East India Company could take an adjutancy so long as they had at least four years service. DHC, D/DOY/A/7/4. Regulations and Allowances, 1833.

<sup>145</sup> Freeman, *Historical Records of the Hampshire Carabiners Yeomanry*, p. 44; and Webster, *The Records of the Queen's Own Royal Regiment of Staffordshire Yeomanry*, pp. 13, 99, 166, 172 & 180.

between 1827 and 1894 – but the position, once obtained, was stable and not overly taxing.<sup>146</sup>

Although the position must have presented moments of frustration, for much of the year it was undemanding. For this reason it is hard to ignore its attraction to those in the latter stages of their career. Despite Cardwell's changes, for the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century administering the Yeomanry remained a part-time role and, in the eyes of many reporting to the Stanley Committee, it still left large chunks of an individual's calendar empty.<sup>147</sup> Although there were complaints that the pay was insufficient – being lower than adjutants of Volunteers – the appointment also seems to have been a different path for career officers. As Spiers notes, private funds were already essential to regular cavalry officers and so rates of pay were of little consequence.<sup>148</sup> As a result, cavalry officers had a natural affinity with the stereotypical lieutenant-colonel of Yeomanry. As such, an adjutancy provided a comfortable appointment between regimental positions. In 1875 Lieutenant-Colonel Viscount Malden of the Hertfordshire Yeomanry strongly believed that the majority of applicants to his corps – of which there were apparently many – were from men between appointments who did not wish to serve abroad or who wanted a more settled life in England.<sup>149</sup> It has been shown that officers would transfer regiments if they did not wish to join their own regiment's rotation in India; however, it would seem other options existed.<sup>150</sup> Whilst the Yeomanry might not offer the variety or promotion of foreign service, it did allow an officer to pursue other interests in comfortable surroundings.

Carton de Wiart's enjoyment of sport was one example of this extra-regimental attraction. It would seem, however, that he was not alone in being attracted by country pursuits. It had earlier been mentioned in the Stanley Committee that 'independent' officers of the line often took on an adjutancy for the sake of amusement. The uncanny relationship between the hunts and the Yeomanry is a recurring theme, but it is, nonetheless, apparent that an adjutancy offered the opportunity to ride with well respected packs. Furthermore, for a man in the latter stages of his career, it also offered an opportunity to rub shoulders with high society,

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<sup>146</sup> Fellows, G. *History of the South Notts. Yeomanry Cavalry*, p. 153.

<sup>147</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, pp. 114 & 180.

<sup>148</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p. 104.

<sup>149</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 103.

<sup>150</sup> Heathcote, 'The Army of British India', pp. 362-363.

paving the way for future retirement to a particular district. Again repeatedly reported to the Stanley Committee, it was deemed largely essential that potential adjutants were on good 'social terms' with their new commanding officers and that their 'private capacity' should be known to them. As a result, in most cases appointments were made by direct application to colonels rather than through a central list of men wanting positions. As such, it was not unusual for commanding officers and potential adjutants to already be well acquainted.<sup>151</sup> Despite regulations clearly stating that commanding officers should apply for a new adjutant through the GOC District, it is clear that as late as 1908 lieutenant-colonels were pushing appointments of their own choosing.<sup>152</sup>

In 1883 *Punch* entered its thoughts on the issue of Yeomanry adjutancy, seeing it as part of a privileged path leading to senior rank. Observing the parallel lives of 'Robin Slowgo' and 'Edward Scattercash', *Punch* told how the latter found a position in a crack regiment of Rifles with the aid of his fathers 'gold-bags', whilst poor Slowgo was lumped with the marines, despite his hard work and academic achievement. As Slowgo makes modest headway in the marines through hard work, Scattercash is quickly promoted on transfer to the cavalry and is seconded to the Yeomanry. Here, 'the chief duties of [his] appointment has consisted in dining with the Colonel (the Swell of the County) half-a-dozen times a year, and turning out for six days in the Autumn to perform the usual training'. The story continues with Scattercash achieving the lofty heights of the profession whilst his counterpart struggles through to finish in command of a regiment, yet in relative poverty. What is clear is that the position was satirically marked as idle and geared more towards leisure than hard work and industry.<sup>153</sup>

Objections to the conditions were not restricted to the satirical press. One cavalry officer complained about Cardwell's reforms on the basis that, 'he strongly objected to having an officer getting from £200 to £350...who had, perhaps, never served one day abroad'. In the same debate another complained that it was, 'undue favouritism. This meant that appointments were conferred upon officers who had social or political status and who wanted to avoid foreign service alongside their

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<sup>151</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, pp. 61, 67, 69, 71 & 186.

<sup>152</sup> *Army Regulations Vol. X – Regulations for the Yeomanry Cavalry*, p. 20; and NAS, GD497/7/4/2-15. Letters: (04/1907-12/1908) regarding Captain M. Sprot's adjutancy in the Lothians and Border Horse.

<sup>153</sup> *Punch*, 24/03/1883.

brother officers'. The Secretary of State for War's response stated that their pay was reduced in comparison to those serving abroad and that it would be unfair to restrict their promotional prospects as well; salient though the argument sounds, it fostered an environment suitable only for the wealthy.<sup>154</sup> Further comments the following year seemed to compound this argument when it was stated that, 'there was a great deal of patronage connected with these appointments to adjutancies of Yeomanry; a great deal of county influence was requisite to obtain them'.<sup>155</sup> It was not impossible for less wealthy men to obtain an adjutancy, and there is evidence that two men turned down a position in the Westmoreland and Cumberland Yeomanry on the basis of the poor pay and allowances.<sup>156</sup> Similarly, the 2<sup>nd</sup> West Yorkshire Yeomanry had two adjutants who had risen from the ranks of a regular regiment. Supported by officer subscription, it was believed such individuals had proven themselves unafraid of hard work, whilst their reliance on the regiment made them better subordinates.<sup>157</sup> Nonetheless, as Lord Elcho succinctly put it, 'the appointment of an adjutant was almost as important as the selection of a man's wife'.<sup>158</sup> As a result, when such a position opened amongst high society, it is clear that the appointment favoured the already wealthy who were capable of holding their own in such an environment.

The Yeomanry Cavalry presented a split personality: on the one hand a force with pretensions to a military role, on the other, a social organisation strongly linked to polite society. The social composition of the officer corps was strongly dictated by this latter influence, but this, in turn, was also subject to some change in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although the concept of social respectability remained central to regiments, the social background of an increasing number of officers was no longer that of the aristocrat or squire. It is clear that certain corps contained businessmen fairly early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, something at least partly influenced by the declining great estates and the leaching of money from the cities into the countryside. At the same time, however, it seems in many cases that there were simply not enough socially desirable candidates to take commissions. In some examples this change proved to be a departure for the Yeomanry, admitting higher numbers of the *nouveau riche* to their officer corps. In most regiments, however, this group rarely occupied the upper

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<sup>154</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons* 13/06/1878. Vol. 240, Para. 1447-1448.

<sup>155</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons* 16/06/1879. Vol. 246, Para 2001.

<sup>156</sup> Two officers, one on full the other on half pay, declined the appointment. *The Times*, 12/07/1872; and *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 11/07/1872. Vol. 212, Para. 949-50.

<sup>157</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, pp. 184, 186 & 187.

<sup>158</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 15/06/1871. Vol. 207, Para. 78.

echelons of the institution without the full acceptance of society and, more often than not, a peerage to prove it. Nonetheless, this participation was to increase significantly with the outbreak of the Boer War and the years before the First World War. This broadening of horizons came into its own with the early 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion of the force and was most obvious in the 'city regiments' formed in and recruited from London. When this is combined with the estimated 800,000 family acres changing hands between 1910 and 1915, it seem likely that this shake up of rural society continued the pace of change introduced in the previous century.<sup>159</sup> It is then equally significant to note that the number of county elites in the whole force was practically the same in 1914 as it had been in 1850. Although there was a need to expand the officer corps in the new century, it is clear that this did not coincide with the desertion of the established county elite. As a result, it is clear that the Yeomanry remained something of a bastion for aristocratic values and something of a bulwark for their declining control in local society.

The motives behind service predictably varied a great deal, but regardless of date, it is clear that upper-class patriotism was tinged with an element of self-interest alongside duty to public service. Officership provided further authority and the opportunity to associate with the Victorian militaristic values of the 'Christian Soldier', whilst conforming to civilian understandings of respectability. Alternatively, for the materially wealthy yet socially poor, the Yeomanry provided a ladder for social climbing and a vehicle to raise their position by achieving recognition amongst those who carefully managed their own society. It would seem that this fading 19<sup>th</sup> century system of patronage and power was still attractive in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Grandeur did not necessarily come with rank, but a combination of uniform and social acceptance was enough for men to be recognised and for their contributions to local society to be noted. Whilst it must not be assumed that Yeomanry officers undervalued their importance to home defence – particularly during invasion scares and under the gathering clouds of war – it must also be noted that service came with social benefits and that the Yeomanry was not always the sole vector for voluntary service. Genuinely philanthropic or through self-interest, membership provided fine opportunities for both, whilst also fulfilling the desire for public service or national

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<sup>159</sup> Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p. 225.

defence. All of this was provided in a club atmosphere and a setting quite different to the other volunteers.

Though there would be change to certain elements of the leadership, others remained true to form. Regardless of date, it would seem that wealth was a deciding factor whatever corps is in question. Though spending habits were reined-in in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is clear that equipping oneself remained an exceedingly costly venture. Similarly, what might be described as the Yeomanry 'spirit' seems to have endured, something fostered and encouraged through country sports and the events of polite society. This environment also seems to have provided a welcome respite for some less active regular cavalry soldiers, with the adjutancy appearing mostly a position of leisure. Finally, although men from various walks of life made a name for themselves in the Yeomanry, the established elite never left the movement. Remaining stable in number, their contribution set the tone of many regiments and produced conflicting influences upon them: socially powerful and wealthy though regiments remained through the connection, few managed to seize the initiative when it came to finding a role between the Boer War and First World War. Given the ambiguity of their pre-war training and the government's refusal to take positive action with their structure and role, this is to some extent excusable; it does, nonetheless, highlight the focus of the institution as a social enclave where the Yeomanry continued to operate as the, 'country gentlemen's rather costly plaything'.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> *Punch*, 14/07/1877.

### Chapter III

#### The Other Ranks

There is an assumption that, like some feudal hosting, the typical Yeomanry regiment was commanded by gentry and relied on tenants and estate workers for its rank and file. Such assumption has continued to colour the texts of popular works as well as many regimental histories written from the turn of the century. As the previous chapter has shown regarding the officer corps, and this one will regarding the other ranks, the composition of the force was much more nuanced. From its inception through to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the Yeomanry Cavalry was a very local movement based predominantly around county towns and even country estates. Despite becoming part of the Territorial Force in 1908, it would appear in some cases that regiments saw a continuation of the parochial structures that controlled leadership and recruitment from the institution's very beginnings. Numbers, however, had increased dramatically after the turn of the century in response to war, just as the locus of provincial power had shifted further back towards central government. Alongside this expansion and the wider consequences of the Boer War, Britain was readjusting after the effects of the agricultural downturn experienced at the end of the last century. The nature of society had then changed somewhat dramatically. How then might a force supposedly reliant on rural agriculturalists function in this post-depression environment when the countryside was being depopulated whilst urban centres swelled?<sup>1</sup> Both these events and the war that marked the turn of the century instigated massive social upheaval which, in turn, forced dramatic change onto the Yeomanry. This chapter will seek to answer why men chose to serve with the Yeomanry as well as the social and environmental compositions exhibited as society and threats changed. The Yeomanry experience will be contextualised within the broader amateur military movement, in addition to the changeable socio-economic climate that the United Kingdom experienced from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Prior to the mid-1870s there was no organised or accurate Yeomanry return with which the government could assess the condition of the force. Troops operated within loose establishment figures, their size often changing each year and not

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<sup>1</sup> The rate of 'depopulation' was not actually that startling. In simple terms, Britain went from an even urban-rural population in 1851, to one just over 40% rural in 1881. Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p. 7.

allowing for comparative measuring. However, the base unit of all corps was the troop, which was made up of 40 to 100 men. Given the existence of independent troops and the possibility of 12 troop regiments, there is no surprise that establishment figures were unknown in the movement.<sup>2</sup> This lack of regularity is confusing and undoubtedly made the job of trying to ascertain strength all the more perplexing for the Home Office, and later, War Office. Nonetheless, in a number of examples it is stability that appears more suspicious. For instance, for 42 years the Castlemartin troop of Pembrokeshire maintained a figure so close to 150 effective soldiers that one might well ask whether fabrication was involved in the return; such a case was, after all, not unheard of in the force's history.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, perhaps tenancy covenants were particularly binding in this small rural corps and were capable of keeping numbers stable? It is very difficult to say, although some commandants were fastidious in the accuracy of their returns. Captain George Wyndham of the Petworth troop of Sussex Yeomanry, for instance, personally checked returns made by his Quartermaster to pick out anomalies.<sup>4</sup> With all things considered, government and local perceptions were at times quite different.

Despite these odd figures, it is worth retuning to the relative strength of the Yeomanry as outlined in chapter one. The decline in numbers before the turn of the century was more severe than that found within the officer corps, amounting to nearly 70 per cent of their 19<sup>th</sup> century peak in the 1820s. Such a dramatic decline says a great deal on changing circumstances. In a time of relative international peace, but considerable internal unrest, the conclusion of war with France did not alleviate the suffering of the British urban and rural poor. What is more, their ranks were expanded with the return of a third of a million demobilised sailors and soldiers.<sup>5</sup> These groups would suffer considerably during the changes to the industrial and agricultural economies in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the addition of a spate of poor harvests, Poor Law dependency increased alongside the incidence of food riots and general disorder. Just as this may have been a consequence of the hardship of war and the

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<sup>2</sup> See bibliography for Yeomanry Cavalry Returns between 1833 and 1875; and DHC, D/DOY/A/7/4. Regulations and Allowances, 1833.

<sup>3</sup> *BPP*: 547, 1864: Abstract of Correspondence: Uxbridge Yeomanry Cavalry Case. Captain de Burgh of the Uxbridge corps was accused of returning as efficient men who were not in that position or who were not in the corps at all.

<sup>4</sup> WSRO, PHA/5522. Letter: George Wyndham to QM Winder, C. 1834.

<sup>5</sup> Gash, N. 'After Waterloo: British Society and the Legacy of the Napoleonic Wars' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, series 5, Vol. 28, 1978, p. 147.



resulting tax burden and Corn Laws, many saw the agitation as the manifestation of revolutionary discontent.<sup>6</sup>

Britain avoided revolution like that experienced over much of the continent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This, however, is not to ignore the pressure that was applied by a number of popular movements throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Whilst they may not have been revolutionary in nature, there is little doubt that they shook the foundations of traditional power. Details of the interactions between these movements and the Yeomanry will be dealt with in a later chapter, but it is notable that these events coincided with the peaks and troughs in Yeomanry strength. With a significant number of corps formed soon after 'Peterloo' and the Swing Riots, it was the Yeomanry that was raised or augmented to tackle discontent, suggesting an inherent reliability and adaptability.<sup>7</sup> The force was again resuscitated by the emergency in South Africa and it would seem it continued to be a vehicle for participation when certain sectors of society felt compelled to offer their services. The aftermath of the First World War was less encouraging and, in the third year after reconstitution, the Yeomanry was three to 25 per cent short of establishment in all its new guises. Of particular interest, the armoured car companies were collectively more than a quarter short, whilst the most numerous of the converted regiments – the RFA brigades – were approximately 20 per cent short of officers and men. Whilst these figures were probably indicative of wider recruiting trends in the armed forces in the post-war period, it is worth noting that even the mounted regiments of Yeomanry – the cavalry and scouts – were still nearly ten per cent short of their establishment.<sup>8</sup> Four years of war had provided few demands for their services as cavalry and the 'new' Yeomanry that emerged bore little resemblance to their early predecessors. With only a 58 per cent reenlistment rate of men with previous Yeomanry or cavalry experience despite the contraction of numbers, it is hard to tell if this was a reaction to war or the changes taking place; nonetheless, the service remained extant and lost only two pre-war

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<sup>6</sup> The revolutionary debate is extensive, with the post-Napoleonic period, the 1840s, and the years either side of the Great War cited as favourite candidates. Problems arise with what is meant by revolution, but the violent protest that coloured these earlier periods in British history spurred the creation of police forces to contain them; the government's reaction might then be considered an intervention to curtail this potential and is what interests this discussion. See: Stevenson, J & Quinault, R. (Eds.) *Popular Protest and Public Order – Six Studies in British History, 1790-1920*. St. Martins, NY, 1975, pp. 22-23 & 37.

<sup>7</sup> TNA, WO 32/7238. Revised Table of Precedence, 12/1884.

<sup>8</sup> *BPP*: Cmd. 2272, 1924: *GAR British Army, 1923*.

regiments despite the dramatic changes to their organisation<sup>9</sup> As was shown in the first chapter, strength was directly related to government finance; however, whilst the relationship between finance and threats is an important measure of state response, the willingness of men to serve with the Yeomanry in and out of times of emergency is more telling.

When attempting to understand the driving forces behind service in the Yeomanry it is hard to ignore the historiographical nods towards feudalism. Drawing on the historical image of powerful landlords and retainers, the idea that the Yeomanry continued to rely on these principles of military and social conduct was maintained into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> As one M.P. described it in 1889, the Yeomanry was, 'an anachronism, a survival from the days when tenants followed their landlords to the field'.<sup>11</sup> Predominantly rural and often commanded by county elites, during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, many troops did provide evidence for deference and subservience. There is, however, always the risk of misinterpreting definitions and, perhaps more importantly, labelling a diverse force with a limiting classification. By crude definition, feudalism is a means of hierarchical control of territory and people running from land owners to land toilers, often revolving around a complex relationship involving economic and material obligations.<sup>12</sup> One such obligation might be to supply horses or men in time of military need, so the recruiting of one's tenants for service has often been seen as transporting an element of medieval manorialism into 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain. Arguments regarding the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards have said that this arrangement developed into a direct territorial conscription, where deference continued to be paid to landlords through military service and was enforced through threat of eviction. As late as 1995 Michael Hales argued that most yeomen were reluctant volunteers, all of which suggests that this is an area in need of further analysis.<sup>13</sup>

The connections are admittedly hard to displace. In 1798 Sir Henry Harpur Crewe of Derbyshire and the Marquess of Stafford required their tenants to ride with

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 130.

<sup>10</sup> 'Yeomanry Cavalry' *Journal of the United Services Institute*, July, 1861, p. 339.

<sup>11</sup> Frederick Rasch. *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 17/06/1889. Vol. 337, Para. 91.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed analysis of current interpretations see: Carpenter, D. A. 'The Second Century of English Feudalism' *Past & Present*. No. 168, 2000, pp. 30-71.

<sup>13</sup> Hales, M. R. 'Civilian Soldiers in Staffordshire, 1793-1823' (Ph.D. thesis, Sheffield Hallam University, 1995.), p. 147.

their Yeomanry Corps'.<sup>14</sup> In 1802 the Duke of Richmond claimed that his coastal troop was chiefly made up of his tenants and neighbours, although he did not suggest that the arrangement was enforced through their tenancies.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the Macclesfield Troop of the Earl of Chester's Yeomanry was predominantly made up of the Earl of Harrington's tenants from Gawsworth and Bosley, with tenancy agreements requiring larger tenants supply a horse and a man, and smaller tenants one or the other. Similarly, the Eaton and Arley troops were said to have maintained these conditions beyond 1898, and there is certainly evidence to corroborate such a story up to 1893.<sup>16</sup> In the 1820s in the Upper-Ward of Lanarkshire there appears to have been comparable conditions, with men supplying substitutes if they could not or would not serve themselves.<sup>17</sup> Interesting examples of estate authority can also be found in Sussex. In his haste to reform his troop in light of the Swing riots of 1830, Captain Wyndham of the Petworth troop forwarded to the lord lieutenant – his father – a list of names, 'whom the troop thinks ought to enrol themselves'. Asking a figure in this position to apply pressure in this way seems intrusive and is only made more significant by his continuation that, 'except the last mentioned, they are all your tenants...[and we]...must do something to induce these people to come forward. Nothing but a direct application [on your part] will be of any avail.'<sup>18</sup> Shortly after his request, another 20 names were forwarded to the Earl of Egremont. Whilst there is no way of concluding how these men were approached by their lord lieutenant and landlord or even whether he was successful in his application to them, we can see that by 1831 the Petworth troop was 78 strong.<sup>19</sup> To stress the point further, by 1838 this troop would be serving under the same conditions gratuitously, hinting that these ties were robust.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, in the 1870s, the Lancashire Hussars were still reliant on landlord-tenant relations, with Captains Sir Robert Gerard, Bt., Baron Skelmersdale, and William Legh – later 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Newton – responsible for fielding the majority of

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<sup>14</sup> Hales, 'Civilian Soldiers in Staffordshire, 1793-1823', p.141.

<sup>15</sup> Sebag-Montifiore, C. *A History of the Volunteer Forces from the Earliest Times to the Year 1860* (Constable, London, 1908), p. 236.

<sup>16</sup> Colonel Piers Egerton Warburton served notice on Mr. Joseph Knowles of Yew Tree Farm, Appleton, Cheshire, to quit after his refusal to serve personally in his Arley troop. *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 09/03/1893. Vol. 9, Para.1444; Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry*, p. 2; and Leary, *The Earl of Chester's Regiment of Yeomanry Cavalry*, p. 43.

<sup>17</sup> Wood, *Records of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry*, pp. 139-140.

<sup>18</sup> Captain. George Wyndham (later 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Leconfield) was the son of George O'Brien Wyndham, 3rd Earl of Egremont and Lord Lieutenant of Sussex. The latter's seat (Petworth House) included a substantial estate. See WSRO, PHA/5537.

<sup>19</sup> *BPP*: 80, 1831-32: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1831-32.

<sup>20</sup> *BPP*: 364, 1839: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1838.

the regiment by drawing on their tenants; in the first case individuals were required to supply a man and horse for the Yeomanry.<sup>21</sup> Further examples of these near feudalistic retainers were to be found on the Leaton Knolls and Acton Reynald estates in Shropshire during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup>

There are also other vignettes that more subtly hint at similar circumstances. For example, landlord-tenant relations appear to have coloured the history of the Wath troop of the Yorkshire West Riding regiment in the 1820s. When one captain tendered his resignation, his subaltern noted, 'if your lordship retires, the consequence must be that your whole squadron will send in their appointments, for their attachment to the house of Wentworth is too well known to me to have doubt...If they lose their commanding officer the country loses their service.'<sup>23</sup> Though there was a wealth of other explanations for the troop's actions, the importance of strong, influential leadership was not unique to this subaltern's thoughts. Approximately 50 years later Colonel Edward Seager, the inspecting officer of the First Cavalry District, still believed that tenancy agreements were common and also that estate-centred troops were always loyal to their captains.<sup>24</sup> These examples do help to strengthen the belief that deference was a strong foundation to these communities and that manorial authority, even this late in British history, still held significant influence. Interestingly, however, the outcome of the Yorkshire case was not so clear cut: after the retirement of the captain he was asked whether he would approve of his estate tenants continuing their service within a different troop.<sup>25</sup> In much the same way, the East Kent Yeomanry suffered a comparable experience when a whole troop followed their commandant's resignation in light of his failure to win a promotion. As in Yorkshire, the majority of other ranks rejoined other troops.<sup>26</sup>

Further examples are also found in the history of two other troops of the Sussex Yeomanry Cavalry. The Lewis and Midhurst troops both retired a year before the 1827 disbandments, the former stating, 'our services are now no longer necessary in this peaceable part of the country' and the latter because its number was so low, 'as

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<sup>21</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, pp. 178-179.

<sup>22</sup> Gladstone, E. W. *The Shropshire Yeomanry – A Story of a Volunteer Cavalry Regiment* (Whitehorn, 1953), p.70.

<sup>23</sup> SA, WWM/G/24/6. Letter: Lieutenant Faber to Captain Viscount Milton, C.1821.

<sup>24</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 44.

<sup>25</sup> SA, WWM/G/24/13. Letter: Faber to Milton, C.1822.

<sup>26</sup> CKS, EKY/AG5. Letter: William Deeds to Ordnance Office, C.1863.

almost to preclude the possibility of recruiting'.<sup>27</sup> Within a single corps we find these differences and it would seem on the surface that these two troops could not maintain the persuasive influence that the Earl of Egremont established in Petworth. Though it might be argued that they had simply realised their presence was no longer necessary, in the latter case it might also be said that its officers were unable to demand service from tenants as has been suggested elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> Whilst there may well have been an unwritten expectation that tenants should follow their landlords or social superiors, it would also seem that Yeomanry service could be the result of independence of mind.

These instances hardly exhibit 'feudalism', but they do hint at the influence wielded by the wealthy. Whether or not tenancy agreements specifically demanded service in the Yeomanry is of less importance than the apparent deference that existed in class-riven 19<sup>th</sup> century British society. However, this was not a wholesale experience and as early as 1803 many former members of the Dorset Yeomanry declined an invitation to join the reformed regiment on the recommencement of war without fear or coercion.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, when conditions were bad for farmers in Staffordshire, it is clear that estate owners did not pressure their tenants to participate.<sup>30</sup> Though these powers were in the hands of some of the elite early in the century, they did not remain there. One fine example of the erosion of this influence and authority took place on the estates of the Marquess of Anglesey in the 1850s. Not commanding the Burton Troop of Staffordshire Yeomanry himself, the Marquess's interest was stirred by his tenants adopting a different service, forcing him to state, 'if they want soldiering at Burton why don't they take to the Yeomanry.'<sup>31</sup> Dismayed by their apparent lack of loyalty, Anglesey wrote to his land agent:

I am exceedingly annoyed to learn that whilst in all parts of the Kingdom...the most patriotic and loyal efforts are made to place the country in a respectable state of defence...my sluggish tenantry should continue to hang back, and that a troop of Yeomanry, having my name, should be principally distinguished by the paucity of names from

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<sup>27</sup> WSRO, PHA/5521. Letter: Earl of Egremont to Viscount Sidmouth, C.1826.

<sup>28</sup> WSRO, PHA/5515. The number in both troops was declining through the 1820s.

<sup>29</sup> Thompson, *Records of the Dorset Yeomanry*, p. 56.

<sup>30</sup> SRO, D593/K/1/3/5. Condition of the poor and distress on the Stafford estates, 1817.

<sup>31</sup> This was presumably the Militia given the 'second panic' and 1852 legislation. SRO, D603/O/4/4. Letter: Ian (Tho.) K. Beer to Mr. Landor, 16/06/1852; and Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, pp. 147-148.

amongst those whom I might reasonably have expected to have rallied to the Anglesey Standard, and that the Anglesey troop of Yeomanry is mainly composed of the gallant men of Burton, who are not immediately connected with me.<sup>32</sup>

Given his tone it is rather surprising that Anglesey's closing statement read, 'I am really hurt at this state of things, and I wish you to make known these my sentiments to those from whom I might have expected a different conduct.' The response of his land agent was predictably subservient, labelling the tenantry incredulous and ungrateful, and reminding him that he prompted them to join twice a year on rent days. The land agent's suggestion that men serve or face eviction, however, was strongly rebuked. In his reply Anglesey remarked, 'I cannot coerce, it is against the principles I have always acted upon. If any tenants, when they know my wishes, and that it will oblige me by doing as I wish, will not, I can only express my regret at having so little influence over them, when I...[once] had a great deal.'<sup>33</sup>

Anglesey's experience was not a lone example, but the events that took place in West Kent in 1875 were perhaps the most indicative of a changing society. In October of that year Lord Darnley of Cobham Hall unceremoniously resigned from the Colonelcy of the West Kent Yeomanry as a result of a disagreement with a number of officers. In an effort to further injure the corps he demanded that his tenants follow his lead.<sup>34</sup> It is clear that the vast majority of his farming tenantry were serving with the Cobham troop and, although the immediate impact on troop numbers saw them reduced to eight men in subsequent drills, one of those men was a tenant on his estate. Darnley's immediate reaction was to threaten the man's father – the Mayor of Gravesend, a reliable tenant of some 33 years – with eviction if his son failed to adhere to his edict. This act earned him nationwide scorn and humiliation as both the national and regional press circulated the story to every corner of the country.<sup>35</sup> The reaction of *The Times* was initially confused, but it is clear by the way in which it eventually reported the story – as the script for a theatrical farce – that it found the

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<sup>32</sup> SRO, D603/O/4/4. Copy of letter: Anglesey to Mr Landor 26/02/1853.

<sup>33</sup> SRO, D603/O/4/4. Letter: Landor to Beer, 28/02/1853; and copy of letter: Beer to Landor, 05/03/1853.

<sup>34</sup> The extent of the 'demand' was debated, though it is clear that many felt obliged to leave to remain safely on their farms and in Darnley's favour. *The Times*, 05/11/1875.

<sup>35</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 19/10/1875; *Freeman's Journal*, 20/10/1875; *Liverpool Mercury*, 22/10/1875; *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 20/10/1875; and *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 20/10/1875.

episode abhorrent and politically dangerous.<sup>36</sup> The more reactive elements of the press made note of the difficulty faced by tenants in having their own social or political freedom when rental contracts could be terminated with such ease. Nonetheless, the publicity surrounding the episode provides an example of the pressure that could be brought to bear by tenants with the contacts to fight their corner.<sup>37</sup> However, it must be noted that a large proportion of Darnley's tenants probably did not command these privileges and at least some towed the party line.

Due to the explicit nature of some estate clauses and tenancy covenants the Yeomanry recruiting process has been branded as feudalistic. It is, indeed, hard to ignore that the locus of power in many troops was structured around powerful individuals and their holdings, but a number of important considerations must be observed. Firstly, cavalry need space for evolutions; secondly, the maintenance of corps required substantial capital; and, lastly, the government and lords lieutenant were only willing to grant control of armed organisations to those deemed both dependable and accountable. The Yeomanry again became a victim of these conditions, as not only were estate owners usually in possession of significant assets, but they also typically held positions of responsibility and considerable amounts of land. These conditions have allowed a perpetuation of the belief that archaic methods of control dominated the Yeomanry without the consideration of those troops that functioned differently. Whilst social standing and deference were clearly powerful influences in late Georgian, Victorian, and Edwardian Britain, they by no means solely controlled the composition of county institutions like the Yeomanry Cavalry. Examples exist where this is apparent, and it is undeniable that it was often county elites that sat atop this institution. However, it must not be forgotten that in predominantly rural locations a large proportion of property was in the hands of the estates, and though men from such dwellings served with the Yeomanry, it should not mean that they were forced to do so. In many locations, in the place of broader, strict control, there seems to have been a softer form of paternalism seeing an exchange of deference enforced through the regiment. As the Earl of Lonsdale made clear to the Westmoreland and Cumberland Yeomanry during their annual training on his grounds, they were to conduct themselves properly whilst guests on his estate and to return any cast horn collected from the deer park. Though deliberately enforcing this

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<sup>36</sup> *The Times*, 05/11/1875.

<sup>37</sup> *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 24/10/1875; and *Liverpool Mercury*, 22/10/1875.

deferential framework on the regiment, there is no evidence to suggest that their presence there was anything but voluntary.<sup>38</sup>

British society had changed immeasurably after the 1870s and, as one observer noted, 'ten years of bad harvests and falling prices had made good tenants hard to keep, and harder still to find when farms fell vacant, even at reduced rents.'<sup>39</sup> Forcing potentially costly compulsory service upon already struggling tenants was unlikely to be good for business or for the Yeomanry. These sentiments were echoed by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman in 1893 when he stated, 'I can imagine nothing more unfavourable to the interests of the Yeomanry Force than the existence of [such] a burdensome provision.'<sup>40</sup> Outside of genuine personal interest, the most powerful motivation of serving tenants was more likely to be the search for favour. As the Earl of Cork and Orrery noted in 1895, 'I do not hesitate to say that, at the present time, the yeomanry force is mainly, as a rule, kept up by the good will on the part of the tenants towards their landlords.'<sup>41</sup> Despite the Earl's assurance, the most significant limiting factor to this whole argument is of course the existence of urban and non-estate centred corps, particularly those connected to London and other cities.

Though we can highlight the connection between estate and tenant in some cases, the occupation and background of the individuals actually recruited into the Yeomanry is still unclear. The historiography has repeatedly noted that established leaders commanded established followers, typically in rural settings with access to horses. The restrictions of this crude analysis are numerous, but the most pertinent objection comes in the form of the rising urban corps of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although the majority of examples follow some of these antiquated trends, it was clearly not only rural trades and backgrounds that dominated this organisation from start to finish.

As a proponent of the Volunteer Cavalry for its limited demands on government, Gilks is a good example of an historian perpetuating the 'feudalism' paradigm.<sup>42</sup> Throughout his work he puts forward an undertone of antipathy towards the Yeomanry, spurred by the government funds they continued to receive. At the same time, he has based many of his arguments on limited research. When addressing

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<sup>38</sup> CRO, DSen 11/3/5. Standing Orders, 12/05/1910.

<sup>39</sup> 'Q. L.' *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, p. 77.

<sup>40</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 09/03/1893. Vol. 9, Para.1444.

<sup>41</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 144.

<sup>42</sup> Gilks, 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry'.



the social composition of the Yeomanry Cavalry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Gilks relies on Paul Morgan's 1994 article on the Warwickshire regiment in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and for the Volunteer cavalry, John Anstruther-Thomson's book on the Fife Light Horse.<sup>43</sup> Although there is no reason to question the accuracy of the points made using these sources, we should question the significance of conclusions reached from such a limited number of sources. Despite this shortfall, Gilks concluded that the Yeomanry sourced recruits from varied social groups. Claiming this to be 'a hitherto unknown concept', it would seem that the statistics provided by Ian Beckett's 1991 work *The Amateur Military Tradition* have been ignored.<sup>44</sup> Here Beckett outlined a number of regimental breakdowns throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century that essentially make Gilks's claims questionable. For example, in 1817 the Oxfordshire Yeomanry were found to contain a greater proportion of artisans than farmers, and a significant number of tradesmen.<sup>45</sup> Two other examples are used to make the point of massive regional variation, but more to the point, not one stands out as drawing its manpower from a single social or occupational group.<sup>46</sup> As previously mentioned, Beckett stated in this work that our understanding of the Yeomanry has been, 'obscured by the absence of detailed research'; it would be unwise to claim that Gilks's analysis of one other regiment has remedied this situation for recruitment.<sup>47</sup>

It was a lack of primary muster rolls and other lists that caused Gilks to be, 'reliant on more secondary, published material', and this can certainly be argued for the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>48</sup> Gee's analysis of this earlier period has shown that much of the material that exists concerning this question is anecdotal with very few accurate rolls surviving. Nonetheless, both Gee and Beckett note that the common title 'Gentlemen and Yeomanry Cavalry' carried very evocative and specific connotations regarding social composition. Furthermore, this was strengthened by resolutions containing property restrictions published by county committees formed for internal defence.

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<sup>43</sup> Morgan, P. 'The Warwickshire Yeomanry in the Nineteenth Century: Some Fresh Aspects'. *Dugdale Society Occasional Papers*, No. 36; and Anstruther-Thomson, J. *A History of the Fife Light Horse* (Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1892).

<sup>44</sup> Gilks, 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry', p. 160.

<sup>45</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 139.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, p. 140.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 133.

<sup>48</sup> Gilks, 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry', p. 159.

Table 3.1 – Occupational Backgrounds of Serving Yeomen between 1817 and 1915<sup>1</sup>

| <u>Regiment/Date</u>        | <u>Division of Occupations by Percentage</u> |               |                     |                 |                     |                      |                |            |               |                |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|------------|---------------|----------------|
|                             | <u>Independent</u>                           | <u>Farmer</u> | <u>Farmer's Son</u> | <u>Merchant</u> | <u>Professional</u> | <u>Sml. Business</u> | <u>Artisan</u> | <u>S/U</u> | <u>Labour</u> | <u>Unknown</u> |
| Ayrshire, 1831              | 0  | 67.9          | 13.2                | 3.8             | 0                   | 1.9                  | 13.2           | 0          | 0             | 0              |
| Ayrshire, 1880              | 0  | 20.5          | 39.8                | 12.3            | 5.5                 | 6.8                  | 15.1           | 0          | 0             | 0              |
| Bedfordshire, 1910          | 0  | 38            | 0                   | 4.8             | 4.8                 | 23.8                 | 14.3           | 9.5/4.8    | 0             | 0              |
| Buckinghamshire, 1840s      | 0  | 43.5          | 0                   | 0               | 0                   | 20.9                 | 0              | 0          | 0             | 35.6           |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Devon, 1834 | 0  | 42.9          | 1.8                 | 1.8             | 3.6                 | 23.1                 | 21.4           | 1.8/3.6    | 0             | 0              |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Devon, 1915 | 0.8  | 40.2          | 0                   | 0               | 12.6                | 10.5                 | 14.2           | 19.2/2.5   | 0             | 0              |
| Dorset, 1860-1900           | 0.4  | 65.2          | 0                   | 2               | 5.5                 | 16.6                 | 10.3           | 0          | 0             | 0              |
| Dorset, 1900-1914           | 0.6  | 52.1          | 0                   | 0.2             | 15.1                | 12                   | 15.1           | 4.7/0.2    | 0             | 0              |
| East Kent, 1838             | 0  | 68            | 0                   | 1.3             | 4                   | 9.4                  | 16             | 0/1.3      | 0             | 0              |
| East Kent, 1850-60s         | 1.9  | 19.6          | 38.3                | 3.7             | 7.5                 | 8.4                  | 20.6           | 0          | 0             | 0              |

<sup>1</sup> For occupational groupings and references to source material see Appendix 2.

Regiment/DateDivision of Occupations by Percentage

|                                   | <u>Independent</u> | <u>Farmer</u>           | <u>Farmer's Son</u> | <u>Merchant</u> | <u>Professional</u> | <u>Sml. Business</u> | <u>Artisan</u> | <u>S/US Labour</u> | <u>Unknown</u> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Essex, 1827                       | 0                  | 28                      | 0                   | 4               | 12                  | 20                   | 24             | 0/12               | 0              |
| Essex, 1901-03                    | 1.2                | 19                      | 0                   | 3.3             | 6.7                 | 41.7                 | 9.6            | 17.5/1             | 0              |
| Essex, 1908-09                    | 0                  | 25.1                    | 0                   | 2.3             | 10                  | 34.7                 | 20.1           | 3.9/3.9            | 0              |
| Flintshire, 1831                  | 0                  | {-----71.9-----}        |                     | 0               | 0                   | 0                    | 0              | 0                  | 28.1           |
| Forfarshire, 1831                 | 14.8               | 71.6                    | 0                   | 10.9            | 2.7                 | 0                    | 0              | 0                  | 0              |
| Lanarkshire (Upper Ward), 1822-26 | 0                  | 76.2                    | 0                   | 1.8             | 6.5                 | 4.7                  | 5.4            | 0/5.4              | 0              |
| Manchester & Salford, 1819        | 0                  | 0                       | 0                   | 25.7            | 8.9                 | 26.7                 | 13.9           | 2/2                | 20.8           |
| Oxfordshire, 1817                 | 0                  | 29.6                    | 0                   | 0               | 0                   | 19.1                 | 30.2           | 0                  | 21.1           |
| Oxfordshire, 1831                 | 0.3                | 37.2                    | 0                   | 3.7             | 2.5                 | 26.7                 | 26.5           | 2.8/0.3            | 0              |
| Warwickshire, 1855-70             | 4                  | 73.2                    | 0                   | 18.8            | 4                   | 0                    | 0              | 0                  | 0              |
| <u>Total</u>                      | <u>1.3</u>         | <u>{-----49.3-----}</u> |                     | <u>4.9</u>      | <u>5.6</u>          | <u>14.9</u>          | <u>13.5</u>    | <u>2.8/2.1</u>     | <u>5.6</u>     |

That said, this did not stop the Portsdown corps in Hampshire from recruiting their number from tradesmen or for one observer to note in 1801 that the force as a whole was largely formed from yeoman farmers and their social equals.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Beckett has shown that corps in both Buckinghamshire and Derbyshire maintained a secondary intake of professional men, tradesmen, and artisans between 1798 and 1804. In summary, it has effectively been shown that occupational backgrounds in the Napoleonic period were rarely clear cut and could range from farmers and tradesmen to merchants and lawyers. In cruder class terms, it is also clear that they absorbed a larger segment of the middle-class than the majority of Volunteers, particularly when compared to rural infantry.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the dearth of early examples, a search of county record offices and estate archives suggests that Gilks's pessimism for the rest of this period is ill-conceived. As is shown in Table 3.1, such lists are not as elusive as he suggests and nor are contemporary materials such as diaries and government reports. One effective method of deciphering this information is to cross-reference names from the more numerous, simpler contemporary lists with the appropriate national census. Table 3.1 represents a collection of data collated through this method as well as more detailed muster lists and published sources. At first glance the cumulated totals do appear to offer a conclusive national trend. It is farmers that dominate the makeup by largest single percentage, but this must not distract from the distribution of the other half of those involved. More significant still, this says very little about the anomalies or the changing trends towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thanks to Beckett's work on the Rifle Volunteers we know that participation in that force changed dramatically over the course of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the gentry and upper middle-class elements declining from as early as 1862, the lower middle-class and artisanal elements increased in strength and the 'character' of the force changed.<sup>51</sup> Taken individually, the results for the Yeomanry also hint at regional and chronological individualism in recruitment and provide some understanding of the experience of wider society in changing times. As such it is worth dealing with a number of these returns on a case by case basis.

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<sup>49</sup> Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>50</sup> Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement*, pp. 85-105; and Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 76.

<sup>51</sup> Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, pp. 83-84.

The results for the East Kent Yeomanry in the late 1830s certainly show agricultural dominance. Nonetheless, the remaining 32 per cent of the corps came from a very broad background indeed, including the urban middle-classes and skilled and unskilled labouring men. Despite its centralisation in the town of Sittingbourne, 'E' troop returned more definitive results with 77.3 per cent of men coming from farming backgrounds and the remaining 22.7 per cent being either artisans or professionals.<sup>52</sup> Amongst the largest of developed areas serving the East Kent regiment's recruitment area, it might have been expected to find a larger contribution from the town dwelling population. As it was, the farmers of the surrounding arable land dominated its membership.

Over 20 years later the regiment was still predominantly made up of the farming community, but not by the same margins. Practically 60 per cent of the manpower now came from this occupational group with the remainder coming from urban professions, in particular, artisans, shopkeepers, and traders. Sittingbourne (now 'C' troop) also shows a similar decline in this respect. With essentially the same return in the farming sector, nearly a third were either artisans, shopkeepers, or small business owners. Whilst still heavily weighted towards rural society, it was certainly no longer dominated by it.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps more interestingly, it is possible to differentiate between farm owners and their sons, the latter being the highest return in the total results at 38.3 per cent. In these circumstances it is clear that the household was in some way expected to provide for the troop – through familial, social, or landlord pressure – and sending a son would certainly have freed up the time of the farm owner. On the whole, given the agricultural dominance of the Kent economy at this time – with land distributed between many holders – it is perhaps not surprising that the corps was dominated by the rural, sub-gentry sector.<sup>54</sup> Not necessarily indicating the presence of deference, it does suggest a level of self-interest motivated by petty land ownership.

Between the 1860s and the turn of the century the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry returned two thirds of its rank and file as farmers, the remainder made up of lesser businessmen and artisans, particularly from Dorchester. Between 1900 and

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<sup>52</sup> Figures calculated from a sample of 22 men. Individually the figures were: 9.1% artisans and 13.6% professionals. See Appendix 2 for occupational groups.

<sup>53</sup> 57.9% farmers, 18.4% were artisans, 13.2% were small businessmen. The remaining 10.5% was made up of professionals, merchants and those of independent means. CKS, EKY/AG3.

<sup>54</sup> Sabin, C. W. 'Agriculture' in William Page (ed.) *The Victoria History of the Country of Kent, Vol. I*, p. 458.

1914 these figures would still show agricultural dominance, with 53.3 per cent from farming backgrounds, but with a slight shift towards middle-class suburbia and a large increase in the number of 'respectable' working class returns. Further north, Warwickshire provided similar returns after the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, whilst the north-east Welsh county of Flintshire was not far from being three-quarters agriculturalists in the 1830s. Comparably, the majority of Scottish regiments exhibited a similar weighting to the Welsh. Even though the percentage had dropped, the Ayrshire Yeomanry leant heavily upon its farming population at both ends of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This farming dominance appears to have been shared by the Forfarshire and Upper Ward of Lanarkshire corps in the 1820s and 1830s. Whilst all three still sucked in a variety of other occupational groups, they remained rural at their core.

The historic prevalence and stability of livestock and dairy farming in the west of England alongside Dorset's predominantly rural setting allowed their Yeomanry regiment to remain not only stable in numbers, but also dominated by agriculturalists.<sup>55</sup> In Scotland, the 19<sup>th</sup> century force was predictably of Lowland origin where it shared similar circumstances. In 1820 it was made up of corps in Ayrshire, Berwickshire, Clackmannanshire, Dunbartonshire, Dumfriesshire, Fife, Forfar, Kinross, Kirkcudbright, Lanarkshire, the Lothians, Peebles, Perth, Renfrewshire, Roxburghshire, Selkirkshire, Stirlingshire, and Wigtownshire; all southern Lowland districts. No attempt appears to have been made to draw on the Highlands until Lord Lovat raised scouts from his estates during the Boer War. Given the extent of the Highland Clearances and land ownership in 19<sup>th</sup> century Scotland, it might be assumed that the population simply could not support the movement unless a substantial employer like Lovat acted as the driving force. In fact, even the majority of 'Highland' fencible regiments of the Napoleonic period can be shown to be at least half Lowland in composition.<sup>56</sup> As it was, the Ayrshire, Lanarkshire, and Lothian regiments – the only Scottish survivors of the 1838 reductions – continued to enjoy similar conditions to those of the west of England. Pastoral agriculture dominated the west of Scotland complemented by arable farming in the east, including the famous Carse of Gowrie.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, even for these agriculturally dominated regiments, it

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<sup>55</sup> Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, pp. 16 & 142.

<sup>56</sup> Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>57</sup> Macnair, P. *Perthshire* (CUP, 1912), p. 75.

cannot be said that they purely reflected the historical definition of the term 'Yeomanry'.

In a more obvious example of a regiment bucking the historiographically implied trend, Captain J. A. Houblon's troop of the Essex Yeomanry returned a heavy prevalence of urban dwellers in 1827. With more than a third of their number coming from such backgrounds, the farming community was relegated to second place with 28 per cent of the share. Given the increasing prosperity of farming before the 1870s, it is surprising to see such a significant urban contribution, but it is a telling example of the diversity of returns. The remaining percentage was made up of artisans and, more unusually, rural labourers. This latter share reflects the custom in some parts of the country for men to provide one of their workers for Yeomanry service instead of themselves. If they had no sons it was acceptable in some corps to supply a servant or employee, their incentive being the opportunity to ride their master's horse. This was more familiar early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century given the habit of 'live in' labourers and it was not restricted to Essex. As Table 3.1 hints, officers would often provide for a groom in the ranks or otherwise utilise their house staff in a regiment. Fairly insignificant though the numbers are, this evidence does counteract the arguments of the 'Marxist' interpretation of Yeomanry service, obsessed as it is with the clear delineation of class and the purpose of the institution. It should still be noted, however, that elsewhere the blending of classes remained wholly unacceptable.<sup>58</sup>

More than 70 years later between 1901 and 1903 the composition of the Essex Yeomanry painted an even more telling picture of the state of the county. With its farming contingent reduced below a fifth of their number, the bulk of the regiment was sourced from the county's urban centres. That said, by this date they could also claim a quantity of the skilled and artisanal working-class, but the significant figure is the 79 per cent that came from urban occupations. Five years later these figures had shifted slightly back towards a rural vision of the force, but the rural classes still remained considerably outnumbered by the urban middle-class at 47 per cent. Explanations for these oddities are likely to be found in 19<sup>th</sup> century developments in the county. The Essex Yeomanry had experienced a patchy service record that ended mid-century with one troop holding on through gratuitous service from 1838 to 1841. Between this date and 1902 the county could not boast the existence of their own

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<sup>58</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, pp. 96, 98, & 179; and Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, pp. 19-20.

regiment, although Colchester did supply a troop for the Loyal Suffolk Hussars during the mid-1880s.<sup>59</sup> This dissolution of the rural force was intimately connected to wider social and environmental developments. These developments came in the form of the failure of the marginal wheat lands of the Essex clays from the 1870s and the lack of agricultural diversity in the county. This agricultural depression hit farmers so hard that many were forced to adopt more austere approaches to life or face bankruptcy. For those who did not weather the storm, their vacant farms were filled by migratory farmers, typically Scots in Essex, Devonians in Oxfordshire and the Welsh in Northamptonshire. Coming from nonconformist religious backgrounds, many held ideals of political liberalism which in turn distanced them from, 'the Toryism and Anglicanism of landlord culture.' As a direct result of their rejection of 'collar and tie' farming, they changed the social hierarchy and interaction of agricultural society by putting more time into working the land themselves.<sup>60</sup> With less time for pursuits, it is hard to see how such a shift would not have affected the ability of the Yeomanry to recruit from its desired demographic. In the case of the Essex Yeomanry, it seems this meant that the proportion of agriculturalists serving was always lower than those of urban backgrounds in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Gilks has suggested that these urban recruits were, 'the classes advised to join the mounted volunteer corps', and were therefore an oddity in the ranks of the Yeomanry.<sup>61</sup> As has been demonstrated in these figures, however, these men were a habitual part of the force's existence from beginning to end. Although Gee's and Beckett's results have already been quoted, it is worth stressing the point that this was even prevalent before the 1830s, with corps in Portsdown and Oxfordshire showing a predominance of tradesmen and artisans in 1801 and 1817 respectively.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, in 1819, the Burton Troop of Staffordshire Yeomanry contained a significant number of tradesmen from the town.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps more importantly still, after the 'Peterloo' incident in 1819 the *Manchester Observer* stated the occupations of 101 members of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry. Here they showed the corps to contain high street traders, merchants and manufacturers, artisans, and professionals; significantly, they did not list a single farmer, and it would appear that before their disbandment in

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<sup>59</sup> Robertson, 'The army in Colchester and its influence on the social, economic, and political development of the town', p. 261.

<sup>60</sup> Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, pp. 141, 150 & 159.

<sup>61</sup> Gilks, 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry', p. 147.

<sup>62</sup> Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement*, p. 87; and Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 139.

<sup>63</sup> SRO, D603/K/17/73. Letter: Mr Landor to Mr Beer, 25/02/1853.



1824, this regiment sourced its manpower exclusively from the city.<sup>64</sup> The distribution and variety of occupations and localities was then decidedly varied and it is difficult to apply any social model based on class, background or occupation.

Recruiting from urban areas was not a new concept within the Yeomanry Cavalry as a whole. Nonetheless, with notably few exceptions – those counties that crossed into London, Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds, and Glasgow – the Yeomanry throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century remained essentially rural. Any contention should then be directed at these definitions of ‘rurality’: at what point does the countryside finish and the urban world begin? To confuse matters further, there is some historical ambiguity over the term ‘town’, which in some cases left large established settlements not legally defined within this definition. At the same time, small agricultural settlements sometimes maintained parliamentary representation and other distinctly urban characteristics into the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>65</sup> Given countryside depopulation after the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and the development of the great cities, however, a ‘rural community’ might be considered to include the occupants of small towns. Although a professional based in a county town was distant from agriculture, his access to the countryside and its pursuits was easier – and thus more likely – than his city dwelling counterpart. Though the division between the town and the countryside is of noteworthy interest to this analysis, the most significant division comes in the form of participation from the larger industrialised cities; often places in which these regiments had been accustomed to keeping the peace, but not sourcing recruits.

It has been suggested that the agricultural downturn of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was primarily responsible for the decline in the force, though it seems in some areas this might be an exaggeration. Although parts of Essex did diversify into fruit and preserve production and see through the downturn, the county became something of a microcosm for the worst effects of the failed harvests and poor economic conditions.<sup>66</sup> This seems to have been reflected in their amateur defence commitments. Nonetheless, the more established fruit, hop, pastoral, and dairy farming regions did not suffer to the same degree due to the stoicism of their markets. Many Kent, Lancashire, and Dorset farmers relied less on the growing of grains, for example, and

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<sup>64</sup> The results also listed a single servant, a labourer, and 21 members without occupations. *Manchester Observer*, 10/08/1822.

<sup>65</sup> Rowley, T. *Villages in the Landscape* (Dent & Sons, London, 1978), pp. 21-22.

<sup>66</sup> Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, pp. 140 & 147-148.

so the period was passed with less economic stress.<sup>67</sup> As in Essex, this, too, impacted upon the auxiliary forces of these counties, but in a positive fashion. Whilst the reductions in some regiments were simply much smaller, some – such as the Pembrokehire corps – actually increased in number between 1875 and 1899.<sup>68</sup> Similarly a number of other regiments would buck the depression trend, but for quite different reasons. Already not so heavily reliant on the agricultural community, others diversified their intake during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, in the 1890s the official organ of the force even quipped that the ‘new’ educated and urbanised yeoman was not necessarily a bad man to have if his rural counterpart was rougher around the edges.<sup>69</sup> Examples of this urbanisation can be found in the well established Leicestershire Yeomanry which contained a ‘town squadron’ in the 1860s that purposely recruited within Leicester. Likewise, the South Salopian Yeomanry deliberately recruited from the tradesmen of Shrewsbury to ensure good numbers of ‘smart and efficient men’.<sup>70</sup> In a similar set of circumstances, all but one troop of the Middlesex Yeomanry by 1892 was recruited from London with many men, ‘engaged in business in [the] city’. Sheffield and Leeds were even said to have troops formed from foundry employees in 1875, though information concerning the other ranks is only anecdotal.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps most convincing of all, however, was the ‘other’ Lanarkshire corps. As will be shown in a later chapter, there was initially pressure to maintain the Scottish Yeomanry as a rural force in light of the 1820 Glasgow Radical War and urban discontent. However, from July 1848 the Glasgow and Lower Ward of Lanarkshire Yeomanry counterbalanced its rural counterpart.<sup>72</sup> Although there are no records to allow for a full and proper comparison with the examples given in Table 3.1, their adjutant, Captain Kendal Coghill, noted that the regiment was predominantly made up of clerks, writers, merchants, and lawyers.<sup>73</sup> Undeniably an early ‘class corps’, it looked to the urban middle-classes to fill its rank and file.

Although something of a rarity and phased out after 1875, ‘mixed’ corps hint at some interesting employment and industrial relations. The Essex Yeomanry in its

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p. 143.

<sup>68</sup> See bibliography for appropriate annual returns.

<sup>69</sup> NAM, *The Yeomanry Record – An Illustrated Paper Devoted Entirely to the Interests of the Yeomanry*, No. 16 October 1897, p. 190.

<sup>70</sup> Lawrenson Committee, 1861, pp. 13 & 8.

<sup>71</sup> See page 85. The other Middlesex troop was in Brighton, there being no Sussex Yeomanry at that time. Brownlow Committee, 1892, pp. 15-16; and Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 54.

<sup>72</sup> TNA, WO 32/7238. Revised Table of Precedence, 12/1884.

<sup>73</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 156.

earlier incarnation was one example, having incorporated two troops of six-pounder guns manned exclusively by men from the manufacturing establishments at Waltham Abbey and Enfield.<sup>74</sup> During the First World War it is also apparent that the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry recruited Great Western railwaymen and that the 2/1 Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars took men from the City of London Mounted Police and *Daily Telegraph*.<sup>75</sup> On the whole, however, unlike the Rifle Volunteers, employment connections do not seem to have played a large role in recruitment.<sup>76</sup> Though urban exclusivity and elitism might be expected to appear later, this, too, existed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though London would lose its mounted regiments by 1815, and would not have them restored until the new century, the Edinburgh troop of the Midlothian corps was well established by the 1830s. Consisting mainly of gentlemen, it cost the substantial sum of £12 to join their ranks.<sup>77</sup> For many, however, it would be the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that produced these oddities. Soon after Cardwell's reforms in 1871, 'B' troop of the Middlesex Yeomanry became colloquially known as the 'gentleman's troop'. The lieutenant-colonel believed that its London men were so well heeled that there would be class friction if the squadron system of 1893 forced them to join with a more humble troop.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, the Earl of Clarendon of the Hertfordshire Yeomanry considered his 'metropolitan' soldiers as a higher class of man, pointing out that they would wear only new uniforms – as opposed to the common practice of recycling clothing and accoutrements – for which he made them contribute.<sup>79</sup>

The changing habits and backgrounds of participants are also revealed within horse ownership figures. These show a dramatic decline from the turn of the century, but in many regiments this trend set in earlier. The later London regiments created predictable mounting problems, but these problems also affected those that shifted their interests. For example, by 1904, the Middlesex Yeomanry owned fewer than 10 per cent of their horses on permanent duty, the remainder having been hired.<sup>80</sup> In 1894 the ownership figure had been 63 per cent.<sup>81</sup> Although this is perhaps less alarming

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>75</sup> Beckett, I. F. W. 'The Territorial Force' in Beckett, I.F.W. Simpson, K. (eds.) *A Nation in Arms*. (MUP, 1985), p. 145.

<sup>76</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, pp. 83 & 177-178.

<sup>77</sup> NAS, GD45/12/246. Copy of Letter: John Lindsay to Carnaby, 06/03/1831.

<sup>78</sup> Stonham and Freeman, *Historical Records of the Middlesex Yeomanry*, pp. 55-56; and Brownlow Committee, 1892, p. 17.

<sup>79</sup> Brownlow Committee, 1892, p. 19.

<sup>80</sup> *BPP*: Cd. 2267, 1905: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1904.

<sup>81</sup> *BPP*: C. 7606, 1895: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1894.

given their recruitment migration into London, the same criteria applied to the East Kent Yeomanry shows that in the same year a little over half of the regiment owned or borrowed their horses for the annual training. Ten years previously this ownership figure had been near 66 per cent, and in 1880, 76 per cent.<sup>82</sup> As Table 3.2 shows, the force as a whole between 1880 and 1907 saw a drop of some 46 per cent in the number of horses that were not hired and could be acquired without delay. This decrease cannot solely be blamed upon the habits of horse ownership, however. As Thompson's figures show, those sectors suitable for light cavalry use – the pleasure sector animals, the hunters and the personal riding horses – actually increased over the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, at least in part due to the removal of the horse tax.<sup>83</sup> In fact by 1871, Thompson has shown that off-farm horses were in equal number to the on-farm horses.<sup>84</sup>

Table 3.2 – Sourcing Horses for the Yeomanry Cavalry<sup>85</sup>

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Source of Horses by percentage</u> |              |                        |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|
|             | <u>Owned / Borrowed</u>               | <u>Hired</u> | <u>Government Loan</u> |
| 1876        | 88                                    | 12           | 0                      |
| 1880        | 92                                    | 8            | 0                      |
| 1885        | 89                                    | 11           | 0                      |
| 1890        | 86                                    | 14           | 0                      |
| 1895        | 86                                    | 14           | 0                      |
| 1900        | 82                                    | 18           | 0                      |
| 1905        | 49                                    | 48           | 3                      |
| 1907        | 46                                    | 52           | 2                      |

These facts combined demonstrate the impact of the agricultural downturn and the South African campaign upon the recruiting of the rank and file. There were no

<sup>82</sup> Return of Yeomanry Cavalry, 1904.

<sup>83</sup> Thompson, F. M. L. 'Nineteenth-Century Horse Sense' *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 1976, p. 80.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p. 69 & 77.

<sup>85</sup> See bibliography for relevant Inspection Returns which contain these details.

longer tax breaks offered to horse owners who joined the Yeomanry, and it seems that many of those who kept horses by necessity no longer considered the force their own or felt obliged to participate. Greater reliance on hiring was not simply a consequence of a national decline in horse ownership, but must include a rise in the proportion of men unable or unaccustomed to keeping animals, either due to expense or lifestyle.

As all these findings suggest, the Yeomanry attracted men from a broad social and environmental base, ranging from farm owners to their labourers, and merchants to metal workers; differences, it would seem, were inextricably linked to locality, events, and chronology. In the minutes of evidence to the 1904 Elgin Commission the DAG of the Imperial Yeomanry, Colonel Lucas, stated of the Northumberland Hussars that the, 'esprit de corps in this district [was]...extraordinary'.<sup>86</sup> A company raised for service abroad and consisting of Newcastle mechanics and miners was undoubtedly a break from tradition, although it is unlikely that they joined the home regiment on their return. Despite this, it is clear that South Africa imparted valuable lessons upon the command of the Yeomanry. Ignoring his exaggeration of the impact of the agricultural depression from the 1870s, Lucas did appreciate the importance of embracing a shift in recruitment.<sup>87</sup> As has been outlined, larger towns and cities already had an established input into some regiments before 1899 and this trend was gaining momentum as the likes of the Middlesex and Hertfordshire Yeomanry encroached on London.

This, however, was not the key to the successful wartime expansion or the stability before the First World War. The Harris Committee had romantically outlined that 'the permanent element' of the force had previously been made up of, 'country gentlemen, yeomen, farmers, and certain tradesmen', and, whilst they had given much to maintain its traditions, they could not be expected to offer prolonged overseas service.<sup>88</sup> Their conclusions pushed for recruitment from 'other classes' previously not associated with the Yeomanry, which combined with the Brodrick and Haldane reforms' more liberal allowances, meant new recruiting policies. This, as Lucas would articulate later, was a chance to tap into a much broader cross-section of society with greater input from the cities; the implementation of this model, he noted, 'must

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<sup>86</sup> Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I, 1904, p.284.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Harris Committee, 1901, p. 3.

increase'.<sup>89</sup> Nonetheless, the social brackets encompassing the majority of yeomen covered the middle-class and a smaller number of the 'respectable' working-class. The rise of urban troops in recognized corps as well as the establishment of fully urban regiments looks a great deal like an attempt to mirror traditional county society. At the same time, these changes identify more with the rural-urban divide than any shift in class recruitment. The predicted income of the rank and file based on the occupational information of the majority across the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century does not appear to vary a great deal outside of these few anomalies, in spite of Lucas's progressive thoughts.

Knowing an individual's occupation and background sheds some light on their suitability to the cause, yet just as important is their age. In the event of mobilisation their fitness and age could affect their military efficiency. A breakdown of this information will also identify which age groups were being drawn into the Yeomanry and whether or not it was ever forced to rely on an 'old guard' for survival. Finally, there is a need to engage with suggestions made by the satirical press that the force was made up of ageing, rotund socialites and layabouts. Evidence can readily be found to show a lack of physical and mental fitness within the officer corps under the strains of service in South Africa; however, the other ranks have received less scrutiny.<sup>90</sup> Unfortunately, this information is scarce, but the examples below do offer some insight.

A breakdown of the other ranks of the East Kent Yeomanry returns mixed results. Made up of 7 troops during the mid-1830s, the highest average age was found in 'A' troop (Eastwell and Surrenden) at just over 30 years and the lowest in 'G' troop (Lydd and Romney) at just under 24.<sup>91</sup> These figures are hardly indicative of a gerontocracy and nor do they cast doubt over levels of fitness. What they do suggest is a formation of young to middle-aged men. The troopers of the regiment as a whole were just dominated by the under 25 age group, 21 per cent of these men coming from Sittingbourne alone, and a further 16 per cent coming from West Wingham.<sup>92</sup>

Twenty years later little had changed beyond the names of the troops. The highest average age was now 'F' (Canterbury and Bridge) at nearly 29 years, closely

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<sup>89</sup> Harris Committee, 1901, pp. 11-12; and Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I, 1904, p. 284.

<sup>90</sup> Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry*, p. 9.

<sup>91</sup> The others: 'B' (East Wingham), 26; 'C' (Hatch and Hythe), 26.8; 'D' (West Wingham), 26.2; 'E' (Sittingbourne), 24.1; and 'F' (Lees Court), 28.8. CKS, EKY/AG/3.

<sup>92</sup> CKS, EKY/AG/3.

followed by 'A' (Surrenden and Ashford), and the lowest 'C' (Sittingbourne), with 70 per cent of its men 25 or younger.<sup>93</sup> This raises some immediate observations: those troops formed in areas more residentially developed were able to enrol a greater number of younger men, with Sittingbourne being the obvious recurring example. At the same time, it is shown that the whole regiment found no shortage of men within this age band, with no troops' relying on senior members.

In the Westmoreland and Cumberland Yeomanry, Captain Hall's troop returned remarkably similar averages. In 1843 the men are shown to have had a mean age of 29 years and to have served for an average of 10 years each. Two years later, Captain Kent's troop returned essentially the same averages, the length of service being slightly lower at 9.6 years. A year later still and Captain Rushout's troop had an average age of 27.5 with just over 10 years of service. In the 1860s Captain Lowther's troop would return yet another remarkably similar result with an average age of 28.5 years, although he unfortunately did not record the average of year's served within his troop.<sup>94</sup> The availability of these documents relies on the diligence of a captain, nonetheless, records were also made within the annual reports investigating the organisation and state of recruiting in the British army from 1905. Although it is not possible to make a comparable mean average age due to the nature of the documents involved, it can be said with some accuracy that a little over 44 per cent of the whole Yeomanry force in that year was within the undeniably narrow age band of between 20 and 25 years. A year before the outbreak of war it was still this band that dominated with 42 per cent of men within this particular age range. In 1921, after the reconstitution of the force, this figure had fallen to 34 per cent, though it was still the largest age group represented.<sup>95</sup>

Beyond these figures, there are other sources that hint at age. Colonel Edward Seager – inspecting officer of the First Cavalry District – stated in the Stanley Committee that not one of the regiments in his jurisdiction operated with infirm members. Nonetheless, in the same report he spoke of one Warwickshire yeoman who, though passing the field day and performing the sword exercise, was 82 years of age. Viscount Malden complained that it was difficult to remove similar men from his

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<sup>93</sup> CKS, EKY/AG5.

<sup>94</sup> 05/1843; 01/07/1845; and 14/06/1863. CRO, D LONS/L13/14/1.

<sup>95</sup> 10,410 of 23,587. *BPP*: Cd. 2696, 1906: *GAR British Army*, 1905, p. 132; 9,588 of 23,049. *BPP*: Cmd. 7252, 1914: *GAR British Army*, 1913, p. 127; and 1,374 of 4,082. *BPP*: Cmd. 1941, 1923: *GAR British Army*, 1921, p. 137.

Hertfordshire Yeomanry, but did not complain that they were in any number. The advantage of these aged members was said to be their ability to find men and horses. Others, like Viscount Malden, also saw little advantage to sending men on their way when they enjoyed their business. Even so, it would be naïve to ignore the fact that their presence helped keep numbers up in the late century. Despite these advantages, the Stanley Committee finally suggested an age limit in 1875.<sup>96</sup>

For the most part, however, the force appears to have been of a 'settled' age. Nineteenth century averages suggest men in their mid-twenties to early thirties: men who would typically be established members of society, working in established trades or professions. Potentially with families and livelihoods to protect, it is understandable that they might consider the defence of their district within their interests. As threats subsided in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century so too did a portion of the manpower who, as shown earlier, owed less to their landlords once the ties and obligations between the two had been loosened. There remained, however, a vested interest in captains and colonels keeping men in the Yeomanry despite their age if they could avoid the ridicule that came with it. So long as no serious work was to be done, aged members not only made up numbers, but were often more financially secure and had a flair for attracting new recruits and supplying mounts. As for aged members, if they had no sons to offer the regiment but wished to keep their landlord's favour, service of this kind clearly sufficed even this late in the century. The shift introduced by the South African War is clear to see: by 1905 the majority of the whole force would be under 25, a trend that continued into the 1920s.

With a largely common background and age, it might be assumed that motivations for service were also shared. But if not recruited into the force by obligations to landlords or employers, what other inspiration existed to entice men to sign up? Security within a district was certainly a concern in the 30 years after Waterloo, and those with property, businesses, or agricultural interests would surely have wanted to protect them from damage or destruction. But during times of peace and before the resurgence of Victorian militarism late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, what drove enlistment? Exceedingly important to most regiments – particularly those with unbroken lineage – was history and respectability. This came in the form of titles and legends that helped to form part of a regiment's image, something particularly

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<sup>96</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, pp. 41, 59, 107 & 112.



obvious in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century regimental histories. It was, for example, freely admitted by the Wiltshire Yeomanry that recruitment was easier once they were bestowed the prefix 'royal' for their service during the Swing Riots.<sup>97</sup> The same went for those regiments treated to similar honours after escorting royal dignitaries, such as the East Kent Mounted Rifles.<sup>98</sup> In much the same way, it is to be assumed that the battle honour of 'Fishguard' – eventually conferred to the Pembrokeshire Yeomanry 56 years after the abortive French invasion – commanded much the same effect.<sup>99</sup> The real difficulty in answering this question, however, comes from the lack of documents produced by the rank and file in times of peace. What is often available comes via their officers, but their contents do allow us some insight.

Amongst officer correspondence it is common to find the importance of the horse duty and militia exemptions stressed, and communications between commandants and the lords lieutenant of the counties often reminded them of its significance.<sup>100</sup> Family connections cannot be overlooked either. The East Kent Mounted Rifles, for example, contained more than three members of four families at any one time during the 1850s, proving loyalty and what might be considered a hereditary duty. Similarly, as the forward to the history of the Ayrshire Yeomanry stated, its purpose was to satisfy, 'a natural desire on the part of many Ayrshire Yeomen to know something of the previous history of the regiment in which their fathers have served, and in which their sons will in due course succeed them.'<sup>101</sup> These family commitments are also obvious in Dorset, Devon, and Essex.<sup>102</sup> It is also clear that men enjoyed their time on permanent duty, coming together and at times spending a good deal more on 'convivialities' than the 7s a day allowance.<sup>103</sup> In fact, this spending appears to have been so profitable and reliable that towns petitioned regiments to train in their locality or put on events in their honour.<sup>104</sup> Others, spreading the benefit of the allowances, would put forward a family member or

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<sup>97</sup> Graham, H. *The Annals of the Yeomanry Cavalry of Wiltshire, Vol. I* (Marples, Liverpool, 1886), p. 93.

<sup>98</sup> *The Morning Post*, 17/05/1856.

<sup>99</sup> *Daily News*, 27/05/1853.

<sup>100</sup> SA, WWM/G/24/13. Letter: anon to Earl Fitzwilliam C.1821; and WSRO, PHA/5536. Letter: James Bishopp to Earl of Egremont C.1834.

<sup>101</sup> Cooper, *A History of the Ayrshire Yeomanry Cavalry*. Forward.

<sup>102</sup> CKS, EKY/AG5; DRO, 5124/Z/LM/1; DHC, D/DOY/A/4/7; ERO, L/L/1/11.

<sup>103</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, pp. 49-50.

<sup>104</sup> 'Q. L.' *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, p. 96; and WRO, CR1886/Box833/77. Programme: Centenary of the Queen's Own Royal Regiment of Staffordshire Yeomanry and of the Warwickshire Yeomanry, 1894.

employee to gain exemption from the horse duty. The added bonus was that the son or substitute would also be free from the ballot. Throughout the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century serving in the Yeomanry could earn a man a total of 96s if the reimbursement of the Horse Duty is included. Before the end of the Militia ballot in the early 1830s, the addition of exemption was added to this package.<sup>105</sup> On the debit side, however, it has already been mentioned that some regiments asked for subscriptions. In Edinburgh this was a sizable sum of £12, but in Worcestershire this amounted to £2 before 1893. After that date the Worcestershire subscription fell to a more modest £1 and included a pair of boots.<sup>106</sup> In other regiments it was possible for it to be cheaper to join than to find a substitute for the militia. In the Hampshire Carabiners, for instance, a recruit's kit was provided almost in its entirety with few other costs.<sup>107</sup> The generosity shown in Hampshire was reflected after the South African War when Colonel Harris of the Royal East Kent Mounted Rifles supplied two free uniforms, leaving recruits to pay half the costs of their greatcoats and leggings and to supply their own boots.<sup>108</sup> However, these financial constraints were still enough to exclude the majority and make the Yeomanry class selective.

The adoption and frequent change of elaborate uniform attracted a lot of negative press.<sup>109</sup> Its importance to recruiting, however, was never undersold by officers. The question of standardisation to economise was often raised in parliament and appeared in the questioning of all three government enquiries in the late Victorian era; all three, however, stressed that uniform not only attracted recruits, but gave them a corporate identity and something to take pride in.<sup>110</sup> Though the attacks continued, they were largely unsuccessful and there is little to contradict the belief that smart uniform meant more recruits. Indeed, commanding officers and inspectors alike expressed real concern regarding troop numbers should any change be enforced. Usually smarter in appearance than the average Rifle Volunteer, the uniform was part of the pomp that separated these men from the rest of the movement. Lasting for an unparalleled length of time, the individuality expressed through Yeomanry uniforms

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<sup>105</sup> This does not include money spent getting to and whilst at camp or the amount forfeited by being away from work. The horse duty reimbursement was a saving rather than a profit. *Ibid*, p. 51.

<sup>106</sup> 'Q. L.' *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, p. 95.

<sup>107</sup> Brownlow Committee, 1892, p. 20.

<sup>108</sup> CKS, EKY/Z2. Circular sent to parish churches of the East Kent recruiting area, 02/09/1902.

<sup>109</sup> *Punch*, 10/08/1850; 15/07/1865; 11/07/1868; 18/09/1869; and 07/01/1871.

<sup>110</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*. 09/08/1890. Vol. 348, Para. 402; Lawrenson Committee, 1861, p. 12; Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 42; and Brownlow Committee, 1892, p. 18.

even remained effective into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Fred Dixon, for example, joined the Surrey Yeomanry in 1914 because he was attracted to their red facings, whilst the Hampshire Carabiners sought recruits after their church parades in very elaborate uniform before the First World War.<sup>111</sup>

Though uniform escaped any real change before the end of the century, exemptions did not. By the 1870s both were no longer applicable – the Horse Duty through the budget of 1874 and the militia exemption through the repealing of the ballot in 1875. Although the latter had meant little since its failure in 1831, the former seems to have offered something of a boon to yeomen and its removal, wrote one observer, made the right class of man, ‘more independent of [the Yeomanry]’.<sup>112</sup> Despite this, membership did show hints of a recovery by the mid-1890s after the definite inclusion in a general mobilisation plan, suggesting the existence of a positive role encouraged a revival of the service. Prior to this Colonel Seager stated that, ‘formerly, when a man entered a yeomanry regiment he went in for life, and stayed so long that he became too stout and almost inefficient, but still he remained because they did not like to turn him out’.<sup>113</sup> Not only did he believe this practice to have begun to be phased out, he strongly suggested that the late century reductions were the result of removing inefficient men. Moreover, this forward movement of the institution became visible through the increasing honesty expressed in inspection reports. In this respect Viscount Galway was arguably right, especially in light of the events of the new century, when he continued Seager’s sentiments in 1892 by stating that, ‘the old yeoman of portly form, who was a very good fellow in every way except as a light Cavalry soldier, no longer exists in the ranks’.<sup>114</sup> It is clear that the axing of exemptions and the drive for professionalism – spurred, no doubt, by the establishment of Rifle Volunteer battalions – helped purge the ranks of men driven by pleasure or benefits. Despite a continuation of criticism in parliament in comparison to the volunteers – a body of men much better catered for in terms of adjutants and ranges – the Yeomanry saw out the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of the general mobilisation scheme; modernised by the adoption of the professional squadron

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<sup>111</sup> IWM Sound Archive (737), Fred Dixon, Tapes 1 and 2. Recording date unknown; and Picture M813, Box 2. Hampshire Carabiners Yeomanry Museum, Winchester.

<sup>112</sup> Despite being wiped from the statute book in 1875, the last attempted Militia ballot failed during the reform upheavals of 1831. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 131; comments of Sgt. James Milne, Pembrokeshire Yeomanry. Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 166.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51.

<sup>114</sup> Viscount Galway. *Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, 24/05/1892, Para 1641.

system; the setting of a fixed establishment for this arrangement; and finally by encouraging accuracy with the carbine. The success of these changes can be seen in chapters six and seven; nonetheless, they give little reason for the Yeomanry's ability to maintain a strength more than double its late 19<sup>th</sup> century size before the First World War.

A great deal of commotion had been made in committees and both Houses of Parliament before the turn of the century on the subject of incentivising Yeomanry membership.<sup>115</sup> It would be this state of affairs that encouraged Captain Peter Webster of the Staffordshire Yeomanry to write *Memorandum of the Causes which have led to the Falling Off in the Numbers of the Yeomanry, and Suggestions for the Remedy*. In this document Webster deduced that the force had been strongest in August 1843 as a result of the Chartist riots. From that date it shrank continually, in part as a result of horse prices – the animals had, in his view, become scarce and more expensive – but also because of labour reliability and availability. This is said to have struck both townsmen and farmers, who dared not leave their businesses in case they incurred losses. The most serious concern, however, came with the change of conditions in 1870 and the introduction of enforced troop drills and musketry instruction. Although Webster did not think this affected his own regiment, the requirement to complete three troop drills before camp quite clearly offended some established yeomen.<sup>116</sup> Others, like Permanent Sergeant Robert George Kerr of the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry, pointed out the loathsome character of these reforms: a man wasted a day's pay, travelled possibly ten or more miles, and at the end was not compensated for his loyalty. Worse still, if he did not attend he would be fined.<sup>117</sup> To many the results were obvious, leading either to a general reduction in the rank and file or a large turnover every year. This, as Permanent Sergeant James Milne of the Pembrokehire corps found, could be just as frustrating. In 1874 he had recruited 20 young farmers and their neighbours by travelling about his district, but half had left by the following year, only being held to 14 days notice.<sup>118</sup> Despite the glamour and status that may have been attached to service in the Yeomanry, the rise of the Rifle Volunteers further exacerbated these problems by offering the predominantly middle-

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<sup>115</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 07/02/1881. Vol. 258, Para. 253-4; and Brownlow Committee, 1892, p. 7.

<sup>116</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 208.

<sup>117</sup> See chapter one for more details.

<sup>118</sup> Stanley Committee, 1875, p. 165.

class rank and file potential elevation to officership. Indeed, Sir Henry Edwards of the 2<sup>nd</sup> West Yorkshire Yeomanry believed this drain to be significant enough to state that, 'the good men...who used to be our privates, are now officers in the Volunteer corps'.<sup>119</sup> Though the evidence is anecdotal, this was one obvious way in which the movements might compete for the same manpower.

Captain Webster's suggestion at a solution to this complex blend of issues was this: 'the state of the country, both in the agricultural and more populous districts, being so completely changed, it can be no longer expected that the ranks of the Yeomanry should be filled as formerly, and to maintain such a force as is capable of being produced, some inducement is required to make men join; in other words it must be made more worth their while'.<sup>120</sup> One example suggested was the exemption from juries, 'to give [the Yeomanry] some privilege over other people', but such a pardon from local duties did not recompense a tax like the Horse Duty.<sup>121</sup> Even so, soon after the offer was extended to members of the Yeomanry, but this is not to suggest that the dearth of incentives left no reasons for enlistment.

States of emergency had always improved the fortunes of the volunteer movements, and the Boer War proved particularly influential for the Yeomanry. Many who did not want to see active service were still swept up in popular militarism and swelled the ranks. F. S. Maxted, for example, was dissuaded by his father from joining the Imperial Yeomanry on campaign, but he had no objection to him joining the East Kent Mounted Rifles on home service. After his father bought him a horse and hired a groom, he joined in 1902. Though the family was clearly affluent, Maxted joined as a trooper and would continue to serve in the ranks until the First World War. Though he was undoubtedly moved to join by the wartime atmosphere, his diary provides other reasons. The first camp he attended was described as, 'the best holiday [he] had ever had', and the years before 1914 were crammed with social events. Within the four months spanning November 1902 to March 1903, Maxted would attend no less than ten dances or balls, including Yeomanry functions and those of the local regular infantry and cavalry regiments. Outside of these formal occasions he regularly attended hunt meetings with the Thanet and Hearn Harriers as well as regimental point-to-points. Maxted was from a family of some substance, but before

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid, p. 192.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, p. 208.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

1914 he did not consider becoming an officer. His rise through the non-commissioned ranks, however, was not slow and says something of his ability and respectability in the corps. At the same time, it also suggests other attractions to sticking with the Yeomanry.<sup>122</sup>

The broad participation required in managing an efficient hunt brought the right classes together and must have offered some without the usual means the ability to ride with hounds. As with the officer corps, this cut both ways, with hunting men also crossing into the Yeomanry – particularly in times of war.<sup>123</sup> Other horsed sports attracted men with an affinity with the animals and Yeomanry racing events assumed important status within some counties.<sup>124</sup> Other peculiarly British, class-associated sports also had a place in the wider Yeomanry experience, especially cricket from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>125</sup> Nonetheless, amongst the most powerful factors keeping men in the Yeomanry were ‘social inheritance’ and comradeship.<sup>126</sup> As Dorset recruits were told in 1909 – amongst 10 other reasons for joining the Yeomanry – ‘[you] should have about 15 days’ change of air and scenery every year with no cost’ and, ‘[you] shall make a great number of new friends who will help [you] all through life, as [your] fellow yeomen are connected with the same trade and business’.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, Maxted considered his service the best years of his life whilst Siegfried Sassoon’s first annual camp was described as, ‘a mounted infantry picnic in perfect weather’.<sup>128</sup> The Yeomanry remained a social and civilian institution despite the reforms; somewhere a man could enjoy a holiday amongst friends with the knowledge that they formed a symbolic part of the national defences. This symbolism helped distract from any failures in efficiency, whilst the social side of the institution made service enjoyable.

Throughout the period 1794 to 1914 it is possible to claim that the other ranks of the Yeomanry were dominated by the agricultural community. However, closer scrutiny reveals that more than half of their number came from elsewhere. The

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<sup>122</sup> CCA, CC-W/13/3. Diary: F. S. Maxted, 1902-1920.

<sup>123</sup> See pages 92-93 & 220.

<sup>124</sup> *The Essex Standard*, 10/10/1834; *The Sporting Gazette*, 06/06/1863; *The Sporting Gazette*, 16/05/1863;

<sup>125</sup> *Sporting Gazette*, 09/07/1864; Fellows, G. *History of the South Notts. Yeomanry Cavalry*, p. 155; *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 24/07/1856; *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 06/08/1857; *The Lancaster Gazette*, 22/06/1861; and *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 22/04/1878.

<sup>126</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 178.

<sup>127</sup> DHC, D/DOY/A/11/3. Dorset Yeomanry Regimental orders, 15/12/1909.

<sup>128</sup> Sassoon, S. *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, pp. 231-234.

Yeomanry was never a farmers' movement and this is clearly demonstrated in the sample figures. Participation was extremely broad and, with time, it only became broader. Perhaps more significant in understanding manpower is the rural-urban divide. Whilst it is now well understood that the later contingents of Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa were flush with the urban working-class, there are other striking examples of urbanisation before the turn of the century. From London to the large industrial cities of the north, there was increasing involvement as the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, but this appears to be only half of the story. It would seem that a large proportion of the force from its inception was made up of a mixture of tradesmen and professionals inhabiting county towns and other moderately sized settlements. After the Boer War this pattern became more visible and, with the addition of fully metropolitan regiments, this raises questions regarding the standing interpretations of the force.

That said, some stereotypes at least hold true. The wider influence of paternalism, for example, was clearly at work at the heart of recruiting in a number of corps, although this situation hardly amounted to feudalism. The officer corps of the Yeomanry was wealthy and often entertained regiments on their grounds; consequently they were subject to the rules of those owners which hints at paternal principles. This, combined with a small number of estate clauses, has allowed the force to be typecast as a conservative instrument for keeping the peace, held together by loyalties set within tenancy agreements and rural deference. Whilst this argument might be made to stand into the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, it fails to explain participation from then on. On the whole the social character of the force would remain stable, but societal changes and war would have two particularly striking effects: on the one hand reactions to South Africa saved the Home Yeomanry from terminal decline; on the other, regiments looked beyond the land to recruit the rank and file, even opening their doors to previously unrepresented classes. Though some had engaged in urban recruiting before the new century, the London regiments alone were responsible for nearly 20 per cent of the expansion between 1901 and 1902, and they owed their existence to the Boer War.<sup>129</sup>

A sweeping generalisation of motivations through this vast time frame is difficult, but there are trends that remained constant. Outside pressures, such as

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<sup>129</sup> *BPP*: Cd. 891, 1902: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1901; and Cd. 1415, 1903: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1902.

invasion scares or popular unrest, always drove membership. In this respect some regiments did hint at a class relationship or alliance forged through a combination of paternalism, deference, and mutual interests. Tax breaks and other benefits obviously attracted the horse owning classes, but in the boom years of farming in the mid-1800s it seems some men served to keep favour with their landlords. From the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, entertainment seems to have become one of the most powerful attractions. Nonetheless, the dramatic decline experienced by some agriculturalists in the 1870s broke down some standing relationships and coincided with moderate reforms that asked serious questions of purpose and efficiency. The drop in numbers seen in reaction to this rise in professionalism – or at least increased commitment – says a great deal about the reasons for late 19<sup>th</sup> century membership as well as the institution's worth in national defence. It would be the encouragement of war that rekindled national interest, but it would also show the need for change. It is easy to suggest that men of the first contingent of Imperial Yeomanry – covered in greater detail in chapter five – had been caught up in the collective sentiment that influenced the nation as a whole, but those who chose to serve in the Home Yeomanry clearly found membership a safer way to vent this enthusiasm. The ranks of the Home force swelled by 11,726 between 1899 and 1902 and would go on increasing until 1904. From this date they could boast more than 14,000 extra men than in 1899 and this figure remained relatively stable before 1914.<sup>130</sup> In 1902 Brodrick had adjusted their structure and uniform, and introduced a number of universal initiatives to create homogeneity; more importantly for potential recruits, allowances were more liberal. Haldane made further adjustments, with the pay of troopers increased (1s. 2d. a day and 1s messing allowance) and an extra £1 allowance for passing an equitation test. Age restrictions limited troopers to 45 and enlistment tied a man to a regiment for 4 years, although discharge could be sought with a £5 penalty and three months notice. It is undeniable that these initiatives rekindled an interest in the Yeomanry as well as opened its ranks to the wider public.<sup>131</sup>

South Africa and the reforms it encouraged broke a cycle of over twenty years of failed recruitment within the ranks of the Yeomanry Cavalry. Although only 501 imperial yeomen were recorded as having enlisted in their home regiments on their return from South Africa between 1902 and 1903, the war's impact on civil-military

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<sup>130</sup> BPP: Cd. 1417, 1903: *Annual Report of the Inspector-General*, 1902, p. 21.

<sup>131</sup> Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry*, p. 25.



relations was deeply significant.<sup>132</sup> Brought to the nation's attention by its supposed suitability to the conflict, and a direct application for its involvement, the Yeomanry Cavalry was given a mandate that it had been without for some years and produced a changed relationship with the public and a name synonymous with the Boer War. Although the Haldane reforms had not provided every part of the force with a logical role in war, it was certainly better prepared for that eventuality when it came about in 1914. Although the reaction to the First World War was less encouraging, on the reconstitution of the force in 1920, only two pre-war regiments disbanded at their own request. Although the others did not recruit at a blistering pace, this was not unique to the Yeomanry in the new Territorial Army.

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<sup>132</sup> *BPP: Cd. 1417, 1903: Annual Report of the Inspector-General, 1902, p. 23; and BPP: Cd. 1778, 1904: Annual Report of the Inspector-General, 1903, p. 19.*

## Chapter IV

### Aid to the Civil Power

The story of policing Great Britain is not an area devoid of accomplished historical studies. Clive Emsley and Stanley Palmer might be seen to occupy the vanguard in a relatively long line of 'policing' historians, but it is by no means a one dimensional topic or one without continuing debate. This chapter will draw on the works of these historians to help understand the undulating road towards professional police forces, but most importantly it will juxtapose the use of the Yeomanry Cavalry against these developments. As a result, the importance of the military – most significantly this auxiliary force – in maintaining the peace will be assessed alongside its efficiency and suitability in the role and the public and parliamentary reaction to its use.

Maintaining control of law and order in 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain bore little resemblance to the systems and organisations that dominated after the 1850s. The powerful 'English' belief in localism and affection for 'liberty' held sway into the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, something that made professional and independent constabulary forces abhorrent to provincial elites, at least outside of Ireland. Not only did such an organisation threaten to demand funding from local rates, but it also ceded powers from local officials to central government. In this latter sense, it subsequently bore an uncanny resemblance to the despotic control wielded by French monarchs through the *maréchaussée* and the later Napoleonic Gendarmerie.<sup>1</sup> Controversy was even to be found in the etymology of the word 'police': having been derived from Graeco-Roman terms relating to the state, its military manifestations in Europe made the idea all the more unpalatable. As a result it did not find favour in many political circles.<sup>2</sup> Despite hinting at absolutism, the Peelite forces that were born out of the 1829 Metropolitan Police Act would lay the groundwork for one of the most important constitutional alterations to British law with the production of supra-political constabularies. Notwithstanding the anomalies that arise from claiming a law enforcement institution to be above or separate from politics, after the 1850s the expanding constabulary movement took on a variety of roles, from administering Poor

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<sup>1</sup> Emsley, *The English Police*, p. 3; and Emsley, C. *Gendarmes and the State in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (OUP, 1999), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Emsley, *The English Police*, p. 3.

Law to looking for missing persons; perhaps most significantly, however, it began to usurp military forces from their role in maintaining public order.

The system that had kept the peace before the evolution of the constabularies was a combination of the parish constable (or his urban counterpart, the watchman) and magistrate. This was an entrenched organisation long before the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and had proved reliable and effective when applied to small communities. However, as the population grew, so too did urbanisation and with it an explosion of crime and disorder.<sup>3</sup> Although this system could be augmented through temporary measures – such as the raising of special constables – examples of its failure can be found in abundance. Upholding the law in a small community relied heavily upon trust and honesty, but when petty crime gave way to riot there was little that this undermanned system could hope to achieve; if events progressed as far as reading the Riot Act, it had already failed. Unfortunately, the hard times of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars were not followed by prosperity. Instead, the end of war brought an influx of demobilised soldiers and coincided with a string of poor harvests.<sup>4</sup> Alongside food riots, there was also radicalisation of political thought undoubtedly influenced by the French experience. Such detrimental social conditions divided society and encouraged confrontation, at times leading to serious tumultuous gatherings. The way in which many of these large and often aggressive crowds were dealt with was through military force; very commonly, the Yeomanry.

As outlined in the first chapter, the *raison d'être* and function of the Yeomanry was brazenly twofold: to form part of the defence against a potential invasion by a foreign adversary and to counter the potential for domestic revolution. Given the end of war and the diminished risk of invasion, it was the second duty that kept the Yeomanry extant throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were a number of reasons for this. Although the pre-Metropolitan Police system of tackling crime in the capital was far more advanced than that found in the provinces, both still provoked controversy. As it further developed through the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century it continued to aggravate many who saw the powers allowed to increasingly professional policemen as an infringement on English liberty.<sup>5</sup> Events of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century had produced a

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<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to quantify the increase, but to Emsley it is more important that crime and disorder was seen by contemporaries to be increasing, whether or not it statistically was. *Ibid*, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland*, p. 51.

<sup>5</sup> See the Middlesex Justices' Bill, 1792 and private forces. Emsley, *The English Police*, p. 21; also see comments of Sir Francis Burdette, *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 18/01/1812. Vol. 21, Para. 212.

contradiction in this respect. As the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots of 1780 had shown, even a liberal increase in the number of police on the streets would not be sufficient to control a crowd of such a destructive nature. Resorting to the use of the army and Volunteers led to the death or injury of nearly 460 rioters, but it was this strong reaction that broke the back of the disorder.<sup>6</sup> It has been said that members of both houses regretted the reliance on the standing army to bring order – especially the 7 June decision to allow them to operate without magistrates – but this and the existing policing system sat more comfortably with politicians than radical reform, despite its flaws.<sup>7</sup> It is perhaps ironic that the formation of a large county-based police was viewed with suspicion as an instrument of enforcing unwelcome laws on the population when the army's role in crowd control so often led to death and destruction. Nonetheless, this was often the most effectual method of dealing with crisis without resorting to the political complexities of reform. Even when politicians relented, the constabularies of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century hardly inspired confidence by modern standards. Although 80 per cent of incorporated boroughs boasted a police force of some kind by 1842, many were still inadequate, and collectively rural England pooled as little as 1,700 constables in that same year.<sup>8</sup> It would not be until 1856 that towns and counties were required by law to maintain a constabulary. As a result, in times of emergency, magistrates looked to existing authority.

Military forces, however, came in more than one guise and not all were equal in capability or reliability. With a tendency to revolt in sympathy of civilian hardship, a general mistrust of the Militia became entrenched in the 1790s. Beckett has given a number of examples in which militiamen – forced to serve outside of their home districts – identified with local grievances and were involved in disturbances across the country. In a number of cases they had to be controlled with force by other regular and auxiliary soldiers.<sup>9</sup> As a result there was clearly some central concern regarding the issue of further unpopular ballots, but more importantly the use of the Militia as a policing force had been compromised. Fencibles – temporary forces established for the duration of war and for service in the UK – would see extensive service in Ireland and on mainland Britain, and would amount to some 25,000 men. They were,

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<sup>6</sup> Rudé, G. F. E. 'The Gordon Riots: A Study of the Rioters and Their Victims' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, Vol. 6, 1956, p. 105.

<sup>7</sup> Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>8</sup> Palmer, S. H. 'Calling Out the Troops – The Military, the Law, and Public Order in England, 1650-1850' *JSAHR*, Vol. 56, 1976, p. 198.

<sup>9</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 72.

however, expensive, predominantly coastally based, and only on the strength for the duration of conflict with France. The Volunteers had also played a part in this duty during the Napoleonic period, but had been incorporated into the Local Militia in 1808 and would be mostly disbanded by 1814.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, after reincarnation in 1859, the political implications of introducing a policing clause to the Volunteer Act was ruled out in light of their diverse social background and resulting questions of their political reliability.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from the Yeomanry, all that remained was the regular British army. Nonetheless, despite a concerted barrack building effort in the midlands and northern industrial areas between 1815 and 1847, it could still be too distant from tumult to be considered a reactive force.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, its strength in Britain and Ireland fluctuated and during the Napoleonic period sunk as low as 55,938.<sup>13</sup> As will be shown, the early limitations of the transport system made the movement of soldiers around the country slow, one hampered further by foreign commitments and distaste for a large domestic force. In March 1815, 36 prominent magistrates and manufacturers of Stockport wrote to Viscount Palmerston to explain the deep rift in manufacturing society and the importance of maintaining a local force for protection against an expected breakdown.<sup>14</sup> As a result of requests like this, defence and the maintenance of order in the remote parts of the kingdom often fell to local forces, and from 1794 it would be the Yeomanry Cavalry that came out to deal with protest and violence.

The position the Yeomanry filled within the complex matrix of British law enforcement was broad and varied. From their inception many would be involved with escort duties, the support of magistrates when making arrests, and even investigative duties. However, it is the relationship between riot and tumult and the Yeomanry Cavalry that is easiest and most important to identify. Despite Gilks's insistence that the force was idle in this role between 1794 and the peace of 1815, the reality is quite different.<sup>15</sup> On 31 July 1799, for example, two troops of the Northampton Yeomanry were present for the reading of the Riot Act to a mob 300 strong contesting the enclosure of Wilbarston Common and subsequently arrested five

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<sup>10</sup> Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement*, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, pp. 146-149.

<sup>12</sup> Palmer, 'Calling Out the Troops', p. 200.

<sup>13</sup> Hall, C. D. *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War, 1803-15* (MUP, 1992), p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Leary, *The Earl of Chester's Regiment of Yeomanry Cavalry*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>15</sup> Gilks, 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry', pp. 164-167.

or six ringleaders before dispersing the crowd. Food riots in Birmingham the following year attracted two troops of the Warwickshire corps, who operated alongside the 17<sup>th</sup> Dragoons in clearing the streets. In Nottingham in 1812 a troop of the local Yeomanry was employed in the district to pursue Luddites attempting to break frames on both sides of the river Trent. Demobilisation then carried these issues into the peace, when two troops of Tyne Yeomanry were used alongside special constables and a troop of 5<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards to placate an influx of disaffected sailors recently paid out of the service.<sup>16</sup> In Scotland the force would form a substantial part of the forces that quelled the Militia Riots of 1797-1798, an event that placed so much strain on the Yeomanry that the Earl of Hopetoun did not believe that they could contain them in West-Lothian.<sup>17</sup> More significantly still, in Ireland in 1798 the Yeomanry suffered mixed results in putting down the rebellion. At Portaferry, for example, yeomen led by an experienced officer were able to defend market houses and fall back to prepared positions whilst inflicting significant casualties on the United Irishmen. Where they were outnumbered, however, they collapsed as at Enniscorthy. They nonetheless formed an essential and substantial part of the forces that were engaged.<sup>18</sup> To suggest that the Yeomanry played little or no role in policing the country during wartime – both Britain and Ireland – is wrong.

Despite this undeniably important wartime function, their legacy is far from positive. This is largely connected to the peacetime continuation of their constabulary role and the nature of the crowds that they faced. Allan Blackstock's work on the Irish Yeomanry – a separate institution – has shone light on the darkest aspects of the force's composition, showing that it had the added responsibility of containing and controlling militant loyalism from spiralling into anarchy. Irish sectarian polarisation was heavily reflected in the force which made any confrontation more complex and more dangerous to all concerned. The more militant nature of Irish crowds also promoted violent confrontation, whilst the often high spirited feeling amongst yeomen did not lend itself to subordination. As a result, their greatest strength was in fighting planned insurrectionary disorder, but early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were found to be too widespread and weak in number to deal with the 'agrarian combinations' and

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<sup>16</sup> *The Times*, 31/07/1799; 12/09/1800; 01/11/1815; and *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 06/02/1812.

<sup>17</sup> Logue, K. J. *Popular Disturbances in Scotland, 1780-1815* (John Donald, Edinburgh, 1979), p. 81.

<sup>18</sup> Blackstock, *An Ascendancy Army*, pp. 147-158.

other policing matters.<sup>19</sup> After the 1808 consolidation of the 1799 Dublin police and its expansion into the counties under Peel's 'Peace Preservation Force' in 1814, there was a steady decline in Irish Yeomanry numbers. By the early 1820s it was considered nothing more than a third-line, when police and regular forces were engaged or otherwise unavailable. Relegated by the armed 'Peelers' and regular army, it rarely saw service between Waterloo and its eventual disbandment in 1834.<sup>20</sup> On mainland Britain, however, different pressures did not allow for such a rapid acceptance of professional police. As a small, more tolerant and controllable force, the Yeomanry continued as an essential tool of the civil authorities. It has, nonetheless, been branded a 'Tory self-protection movement' used to suppress opposition to the government, as might be said of colonial gendarmes.<sup>21</sup>

Though it is predictable that notable failures attracted the majority of press attention and continue to occupy historians, it is unfortunate that the most infamous of Yeomanry blunders continues to be the force's sole association in the present day. In August 1819 at St. Peter's Field, Manchester, Henry Hunt – noted orator, supporter of working-class radicalism, and ironically a former yeoman – and the Manchester Patriotic Union prepared to speak to an expecting crowd.<sup>22</sup> Calling for political reform amongst a host of other demands, the day ended in debacle in what the radical press dubbed the 'Peterloo' Massacre. The incident immortalised the Yeomanry as a tool of government subjugation and a bulwark of the governing class. A great deal has been written about this subject and it is not the intention to analyse the events in any detail. However, it will suffice to say that when the magistrates called for military support to arrest the ringleaders, it was the relatively new corps of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry that arrived first. They were quickly swamped by the crowd and required other units to clear the field and protect them from violence.<sup>23</sup> In the *mêlée*, however, up to 17 civilians were killed and 650 injured.<sup>24</sup> It is hard to say who deserved the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, pp. 251, 257, 263, 265 & 268.

<sup>20</sup> Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland*, p. 32; and Blackstock, *An Ascendancy Army*, pp. 265 & 266.

<sup>21</sup> Hales, 'Civilian Soldiers in Staffordshire, 1793-1823', p. 140.

<sup>22</sup> Hunt had been an officer in the Wiltshire Yeomanry. Hunt, *Memoirs of Henry Hunt, Esq. Vol. I*, pp. 205 & 439.

<sup>23</sup> Leary, *The Earl of Chester's Regiment of Yeomanry Cavalry*, pp. 73-79

<sup>24</sup> The figures remain ambiguous. Those mentioned are the most inflated from Poole who in turn references M. L. Bush's 2005 article *The Casualties of Peterloo*. Manchester Centre for Regional History, Occasional Publications. Lancaster. A plaque erected in 2007 lists 15 deaths and 600 injuries. See: Poole, R. 'The March to Peterloo: Politics and Festivity in Late Georgian England.' *Past & Present*, No. 192. 2006, p. 112.

blame for this heavy handedness, but it is worth pointing out that the 15<sup>th</sup> Hussars and the Earl of Chester's Yeomanry were the regiments asked to clear the field and that the latter believed in hindsight that, 'it would be impossible to disperse a meeting of this kind...without casualties'. This observation aside, the Earl of Chester's Yeomanry could take solace in Major-General Sir John Bing's observation that 'the Manchester Yeomanry get all the blame from the Whigs – what [the Earl of Chester's Yeomanry] did was gentle and right'.<sup>25</sup> Given that the majority of injuries were crush related, however, it would seem that *The Ladies' Monthly Museum* might have been more accurate when they said that all involved had cleared the ground with 'more heat than prudence'.<sup>26</sup> Despite what should be seen as shared responsibility, it was the inexperienced Manchester and Salford Yeomanry who received the blame, held up as the perpetrators of the violence. They were subsequently disbanded, but the throwing out of the cases against them by a 'Grand Jury' at the Lancashire Assizes confused matters. If the charges against them were untrue then those who had sworn their truth were open to prosecutions of perjury and libel. That no cases were made suggested to *The Times* that the original prosecutions were based in truth.<sup>27</sup>

Echoing political and class tensions, it is predictable that the impact upon defence spending was positive. Less predictable, however, is that a great deal of this spending bolstered the Yeomanry. Although held responsible for the violence, the augmentation of the institution is obvious in the increasing size of the force in Chart 1.1 (see page 25). Spending went up in accordance, reaching a ceiling for the century at £207,568.<sup>28</sup> This near 75 per cent increase suggests with authority that in times of emergency the government was as quick to fill the institution's coffers as certain men were willing to serve. The Manchester and Salford Yeomanry absorbed the blows of 'Peterloo' and were offered as a sacrifice to appease the opposition; at the same time, however, the rest of the force was strengthened.

Despite its robust legacy, 'Peterloo' was not the only questionable example of the Yeomanry's handling of civilians. It would be swiftly followed by the Glasgow Radical War in which various Scottish regiments faced more determined and armed

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<sup>25</sup> Letter: Major-General Sir John Bing to Lieutenant-Colonel Townshend, 22/08/1819 in Leary, *The Earl of Chester's Regiment of Yeomanry Cavalry*, pp. 77 & 98.

<sup>26</sup> *The Ladies' Monthly Museum*, 01/09/1819.

<sup>27</sup> *The Times*, 09/09/1819.

<sup>28</sup> *BPP*: 67, 1834: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1833.



opposition, in which both sides suffered.<sup>29</sup> Despite Midlothian troops referring to the episode as the 'Glasgow Campaign', and readily enjoying the recruitment it encouraged, by the mid-1820s Britain seemed to have less revolutionary potential than it did ten years before.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, although Palmer has shown that serious crime increased sixfold between 1805 and 1848, those events requiring the intervention of the Yeomanry fell considerably.<sup>31</sup> In fact, by 1827 local magistrates and lords lieutenant only called upon their services six times to deal with unruly crowds; this amounted to a near 90 per cent decrease compared to 1820.<sup>32</sup> Having relied on auxiliaries for crowd control during war, the authorities carried this practice into the peace. Eleven years after that peace and seven years since 'Peterloo', however, the Yeomanry still demanded £162,480 at the vote.<sup>33</sup> With many corps operationally idle outside of training it is understandable that this expenditure was unacceptable. Easy retrenchment would always be popular with governments regardless of political persuasion, particularly after a period of prolonged war. An auxiliary force that eagerly awaited riot and tumult in a period that was practically devoid of both was a ready target. By 1827 the massive expansion that took place in reaction to 'Peterloo' was clearly proving excessive and looked more so with every year; as a result, purse strings were drawn in considerably by Canning's weak and Whig-reliant Tory government.<sup>34</sup> Those corps that had not been called out in aid of the civil power within the last ten years fell to this retrenchment.<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately the 1827 disbandments were to prove a costly measure, certainly outweighing the £92,315 they had saved through retrenchment.<sup>36</sup> Three years after the cuts the countryside of the south of England was subjected to aggressive agricultural unrest in the form of riots, machine breaking, and incendiarism during the 'Swing' riots. These riots were complex and the damage broader than is often assumed. Upheld as the last great agrarian revolt, in truth the violence affected

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<sup>29</sup> *The Times*, 11/04/1820.

<sup>30</sup> NAS, GD51/1025/2. Letter: Robert Cockburn to R. W. Hay 15/04/1820.

<sup>31</sup> Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland*, pp. 381 & 382.

<sup>32</sup> There were 51 incidents in 1820 and six in 1827. *BPP*: 273, 1828: Return of Volunteers in Aid of the Civil Power, 1818-1827.

<sup>33</sup> *BPP*: 168, 1835: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1834.

<sup>34</sup> See chapter one for political support for the Yeomanry.

<sup>35</sup> *The Times*, 06/12/1827.

<sup>36</sup> *BPP*: 67, 1834: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1833.

substantial numbers of town businesses with the smashing of foundries, sawmills, and other machinery common.<sup>37</sup>

Figure 4.1: Counties with Yeomanry Corps, 1828<sup>38</sup>



<sup>37</sup> Hobsbawm, E. and Rudé, G. *Captain Swing* (Unwin, London, 1969), chapter 11.

<sup>38</sup> Counties marked with dotted borders had Yeomanry serving gratis. Compiled from TNA, WO 32/7238. Yeomanry Cavalry Table of Precedence; and *BPP*: 80, 1831-32: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1832; and Freeman, *Historical Records of the Hampshire Carabiniers Yeomanry*, p. 350.

Nevertheless, against a background of failing post-war agricultural prices, other triggers compounded the problems of the rural poor. Further bad harvests; the perpetuation of low wages through the Speenhamland system; the influx of Irish labour; the introduction of threshing machines; and debilitating tithes and game laws provided momentum to the movement. The cuts had reduced the Yeomanry by around 21,332 men, leaving a mere 8,351 in the ranks. To make matters worse, those retained predominantly occupied the industrial north where discontent was expected.<sup>39</sup> Unlike Irish Whiteboyism, the crimes of 'Swing' rarely escalated to physical violence, but they caused large scale alarm in parliament because they were not thought possible within the southern counties of England. As Palmer observed, 'large-scale rural turbulence was supposed to be an Irish phenomenon', and the strong government response in the aftermath showed the desire to make examples amongst the agricultural working class.<sup>40</sup>

The discontent first surfaced in Elham, within the district of the recently disbanded East Kent Yeomanry, and would form a microcosm of the weaknesses of local authority without the Yeomanry.<sup>41</sup> After magistrates called an emergency meeting in the county it was decided to pool the constables of the affected hundreds and have them suggest names for special constables. Rewards were also offered to those who might have information leading to convictions, but most interesting was the onus placed on farmers and landowners to protect themselves.<sup>42</sup> In light of this it is surprising to learn that the debate over re-raising the county's Yeomanry regiments stagnated, especially when correspondence from the county suggested that it was needed and supported.<sup>43</sup> *The Times* of 13 November reported opposition amongst the gentlemen present at a meeting at the Corn Market in Rochester, which ended without resolution.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps more surprising still, after hearing dissenting voices, a later meeting relented to reduce tithes and rents to satisfy the demands of rioters rather than reform the corps.<sup>45</sup> The East Kent Yeomanry would eventually reform on 30 November that year, the West Kent Yeomanry not following until 14 May 1831; both

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<sup>39</sup> The values are approximate because the only figures available between 1821 and 1830 are for 1829.

<sup>40</sup> Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland*, p. 387.

<sup>41</sup> Griffin, C. J. "Policy on the Hoof": Sir Robert Peel, Sir Edward Knatchbull and the Trial of the Elham Machine Breakers, 1830' *Rural History*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2004.

<sup>42</sup> *The Times*, 27/09/1830.

<sup>43</sup> TNA, HO 52/8/92 (Folio 203-205). Letter: B. Sandford to John Irving, MP, 08/10/1830; and HO 52/8/71 (Folio 155-156). Letter: Marquis of Camden to Home Secretary, 12/11/1830.

<sup>44</sup> *The Times*, 13/11/1830.

<sup>45</sup> *The Morning Post*, 13/11/1830.

too late to contain the riots.<sup>46</sup> Although there are no clear explanations for this lacklustre response, there are clues.

The Home Secretary Robert Peel was keen for the Lord Lieutenant, Earl Camden, to reform the force in the county on the basis that it would, 'check the spirit' of the movement, rather than cut it down.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, both Kent Yeomanry regiments found it hard to recruit other ranks. Suggestions later made in parliament would state that magistrates and lords lieutenant believed this reluctance was born out of fear of reprisals.<sup>48</sup> This was not without precedent: in Scotland during the Militia Riots of 1797 there had been accusations that the Yeomanry did not act through fear for their property. Similarly, in 1819 an officer of the Earl of Chester's Yeomanry was lucky to escape with only having his windows smashed by a mob.<sup>49</sup> In the case of the Swing Riots, these fears were welded to the structure of society and the nature of events, as the rural middle-class would have to fight an uprising for which they were largely responsible. Whether by strangling wages and forcing reliance on outside relief, or by introducing the machinery seen as taking winter work from labourers, the potential repercussions of putting down the mob were well reported. Many farmers saw their year's crop, threshing machines, ricks, and barns go up in smoke without acting against the rioters, and doing so might have been encouragement. Alternatively, Hobsbawm and Rudé suggested that farmers and squires were equally unhappy with the burden of tithes and avoided confrontation in the hope that clergymen would bow to demands that would benefit all.<sup>50</sup> Safe in the knowledge that they would not be facing the wrath of the authorities, these groups could wait out the violence and gain from it. However, given that many farmers also raised wages, fear seems the more convincing argument.

Whatever the cause of the tardy reaction, the movement largely gained and lost momentum of its own accord. Where confrontation took place, it was mostly with makeshift, mutual protection societies of landlords and loyal tenants, as supported by Robert Peel.<sup>51</sup> It is, however, hard to ignore the parallels this drew with the Yeomanry

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<sup>46</sup> TNA, WO 32/7238. Yeomanry Cavalry Table of Precedence, 12/1884.

<sup>47</sup> CKS, U840 C250/10/8. Letter: Peel to Camden, 02/11/1830; and CKS, U840 C250/10/2. Letter: Peel to Camden 18/10/1830.

<sup>48</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 26/07/1850. Vol. 113, Para. 371-390.

<sup>49</sup> Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland*, p. 81; & Leary, *The Earl of Chester's Regiment of Yeomanry Cavalry*, p. 81.

<sup>50</sup> Hobsbawm and Rudé *Captain Swing*, pp. 34 & 231-232.

<sup>51</sup> *The Times*, 16/11/1830; and Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland*, p. 393.

movement. So much so, that in Sussex more than 60 per cent of the special constables raised in the Petworth area in 1830 had served in the disbanded Yeomanry corps.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, what would become known as the 'Sussex Plan' – a local, loyal militia-like force later espoused by the Home Office – was to be the brainchild of the Duke of Richmond, a former Yeomanry commanding officer.<sup>53</sup> Despite the thoughts of some within parliament regarding the efficiency and zeal of would-be yeomen, it would seem more likely that events outran bureaucracy leaving most corps to reform in the aftermath of the riots.<sup>54</sup>

Although it was difficult to reform some corps in this chaos, this did not stop voluminous correspondence reaching the Home Office deploring the disbandment of so much of the force. In Berkshire, Middlesex, Hampshire, Dorset, Northamptonshire, Gloucestershire, and East Somerset, county officials and other observers complained of their want of Yeomanry and the belief that, had it not been reduced, then events would not have escalated.<sup>55</sup> Corps in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire – not officially recognised as they served gratis – found their services in such great demand in neighbouring counties that they too wrote to the Home Office to request that they be brought back to deal with riots in their own neighbourhoods.<sup>56</sup> It would seem that some hastily raised protection societies shortly afterwards became Yeomanry corps, and in many cases it was made clear that ex-Yeomanry officers were providing leadership. This was widespread and there was a similar story in the ranks.<sup>57</sup> Although some have claimed that it was 'typically English' methods that returned control, it would actually seem that many of the societies were Yeomanry corps out of uniform, shortly to be reconstructed.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> WSRO, PHA/5534. Of 64 special constables, 39 had served within Colonel Wyndham's corps.

<sup>53</sup> Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland*, p. 394.

<sup>54</sup> As of 01/01/1832, 84% of Yeomanry corps (78 of the 93 corps) had formed in December 1830 or later. The remaining 16% (15) either survived in 1827 or formed before the riots. *BPP*: 80, 1831-32: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1831; and *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 27/04/1838. Vol. 42, Para. 640.

<sup>55</sup> TNA, HO 52/6/12 (Folio 25-26A). Letter: J. Pearse to Home Secretary, 22/11/1830; HO 52/7/11 (Folio 19-20). Letter: Lockheart to Home Secretary, 26/11/1830; /133 (Folio 302-303). Letter: Earl Digby to Home Secretary, 28/11/1830; /190 (Folio 430-433). Letter: Arbuthnot to Home Secretary, 03/12/1830; /225 (Folio 522-523). Letter: J. Huntingford to Home Secretary, 30/11/1830; and HO 52/11/62 (Folio 147-148). Letter: Marquis of Bath to Home Secretary, 03/12/1830.

<sup>56</sup> TNA, HO 52/6/124 (Folio 261-262). Letter: Vincent to Home Secretary, 30/11/1830.

<sup>57</sup> HO 52/6/22 (Folio 43-49). Letter: Charles Dundas to Home Secretary, 24/11/1830; & HO 52/7/133 (Folio 302-303). Letter: Earl Digby to Home Secretary, 28/11/1830.

<sup>58</sup> Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland*, p. 393-394; and Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p. 255.

'Captain Swing' appears to have been nothing more than an apparition, but he and his followers caused a great deal of panic and destruction. It was difficult to keep pace with the crimes and the authorities repeatedly failed to intercept those destroying machinery.<sup>59</sup> These events highlighted the weaknesses of the system after 1827, but even where there was Yeomanry or regular soldiers, the issues of using them for constabulary work was evident. A peaceful yet determined crowd presents a particular problem, especially when magistrates and soldiers are both subject to the law.<sup>60</sup> When a crowd turned violent, however, there is no evidence to suggest that the Yeomanry held back. The Wiltshire Yeomanry were probably the most active corps during the riots, serving in a host of neighbouring counties and seeing extensive service in their own.<sup>61</sup> Widely praised for their hard work, they did not go about their business without zeal. Arresting many ringleaders and rioters, and responding to violence across the county, they performed a valuable service, later recognised by the addition of 'Royal' to their title; nonetheless, they were also responsible for the only fatality inflicted by the authorities.<sup>62</sup>

The Yeomanry's involvement had been intensive in the areas in which it existed, but these were few. The argument has been made that the authorities showed a reluctance to use the force in fear of creating needless alarm, but there is little evidence to support this case in the counties.<sup>63</sup> It is clear that Peel believed the dormant local presence was more effective than the sluggish reactions of the regular army and, although he was not keen to re-raise the force, Melbourne did just that in the aftermath.<sup>64</sup> The failure to contain the riots gave considerable weight to the argument for keeping the Yeomanry by proving that popular discontent had not died with the end of war and that rural Britain remained vulnerable. The permanent, dormant force of the Yeomanry could keep the peace cheaply. Though it might not have been perfect for the job, it was infinitely better than gambling with retrenchment and hoping that parts of the country would remain peaceful. Coincidence or not, the riots had begun and propagated in counties without Yeomanry and came to end in

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<sup>59</sup> *The Times*, 23/11/1830.

<sup>60</sup> Palmer, 'Calling Out the Troops', p. 209.

<sup>61</sup> TNA, HO 52/11/13 (Folio 28-29). Letter: Smith to Francis Freeling, 24/11/1830; and /26 (Folio 55A-55B). Letter: Fulwar Craven to Edward Meyrick, 26/11/1830.

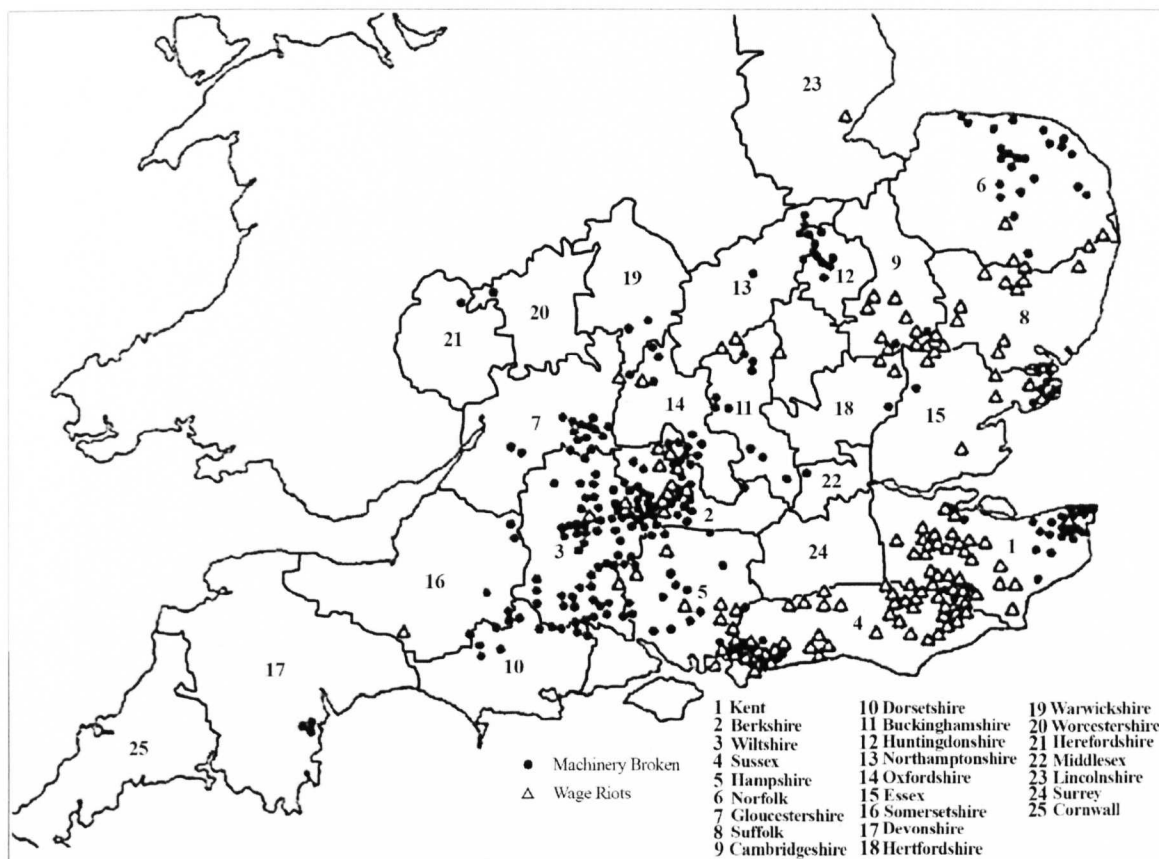
<sup>62</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 27/04/1838. Vol. 42, Para. 640; and Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland*, p. 393.

<sup>63</sup> Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland*, p. 393.

<sup>64</sup> Griffin, "Policy on the Hoof", p. 141.

those where it remained. As a result numbers swelled from 8,351 to 22,712 between 1829 and 1835.<sup>65</sup>

Figure 4.2: Distribution of Violent acts during the Swing Riots, 1830-31 <sup>66</sup>



The 1830s was a turbulent decade and, though there is no official data to show the employment of the Yeomanry, there is a wealth of other evidence showing its widespread use. In particular, the year following ‘Swing’ saw extensive riots in response to the delayed parliamentary reform bill and the depressed state of the economy. In the early summer of 1831 these pressures boiled over in Merthyr Tydfil leading to near full-scale insurrection. Miners and steel workers vented their frustrations by taking control of the town, starting by dismantling the debtors’ court from which they redistributed seized property. The authorities immediately applied for regular soldiers, but a number of troops of the Glamorgan Yeomanry were also mobilised.<sup>67</sup> Early on tensions escalated into a face-off between rioters and an infantry

<sup>65</sup> BPP: 111, 1847-48: Yeomanry Cavalry Return, 1829, 1835, 1840 & 1847.

<sup>66</sup> Compiled from Langton, J. & Morris, R. J. *Atlas of Industrializing Britain, 1780-1914* (Methuen, 1986), p. 187.

<sup>67</sup> Owen, B. *Glamorgan - Its Gentlemen & Yeomanry 1797 to 1980* (Starling, 1983), pp. 41-49.

detachment of the 93<sup>rd</sup> Regiment. In the *mêlée* that followed the order to disperse, 12 rioters and two soldiers were killed.<sup>68</sup> Shortly after this the Yeomanry fatefully attempted to make its own way into the town. The result of this endeavour caused considerable embarrassment to the movement and the regiment, something that came to a head with a local inquiry known as the 'Penrice incident'. Under-armed and in relatively small numbers, Major Penrice of the Glamorgan Yeomanry had been attempting to enter the still partially occupied town with an advanced party. Before they got to their objective, however, they were ambushed by rioters who had erected roadblocks and hidden amongst the slag heaps of the surrounding area. Fortunately the rioters were only interested in weapons and the yeomen were disarmed and sent on their way with nothing but their pride injured.<sup>69</sup> It was not, however, the only incident to take place.

On a separate occasion the Glamorgan corps was escorting gunpowder into the town and was faced with a similar event. Having again erected a road block and occupied the high ground, a party of rioters demanded that they retire. To the surprise of one regular officer, this they did, and after coming under fire, began to rout.<sup>70</sup> Although other sections of the Glamorgan Yeomanry had managed to avoid serious embarrassment and an inquiry into the 'Penrice incident' had exonerated the men from blame, much like the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry, the corps was disbanded by the end of the year; once more a political liability was cut away to save wider embarrassment.<sup>71</sup>

Merthyr Tydfil was not the only undoing of a Yeomanry corps in the 1830s. The most potent and controversial of all the reform riots were those that took place in Bristol in the autumn of the same year. Trouble for some yeomen started before they reached the city when they were challenged about withholding the rights of their fellow citizens. Upon receiving orders to parade and march to Bristol, the headquarters of the Bath troop was surrounded by a local mob which intimidated many of their rank and file to the extent that they refused to turn out.<sup>72</sup> Once others made it to the city they were met with disarray rather than an active magistracy. The part played by the Bedminster troop of North Somersetshire Yeomanry was described

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<sup>68</sup> *The Times*, 07/06/1831.

<sup>69</sup> Owen, *Glamorgan - Its Gentlemen & Yeomanry*, p. 41.

<sup>70</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 26/07/1850. Vol. 113, Para. 376.

<sup>71</sup> Owen, *Glamorgan - Its Gentlemen & Yeomanry*, p. 41.

<sup>72</sup> For examples of political reliability see chapter one. 'Q. L.' *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, p. 44.



by Bristol's M.P. and vocal detractor of the force, Francis Berkeley, when he stated that: 'about ten of the Somersetshire yeomanry marched into Bristol, and they were kindly locked up by the authorities to prevent the mob from harming them.' He went on to comment on the involvement of the Doddington and Marshfield troops of Gloucestershire Yeomanry which he alleged, 'marched into Bristol...at the request of the magistrates, and marched out again by the light of the Bristol fires'. By his account and that of others, the Yeomanry was spared the wrath of the crowds because the authorities feared for their safety given their small numbers and the public reaction to their presence.<sup>73</sup> More succinctly still, Berkeley concluded that, 'Bristol was on fire for three days...[and] the Yeomanry were of no more use than a set of old applewomen.'<sup>74</sup>

Although Captain Sir William Miles remarked in defence of his North Somerset Yeomanry that they, 'could not be called out without a magistrate's order, and it was by order of Alderman Daniels that they retired to the riding-house', it was hardly a defence against a slight on their number.<sup>75</sup> In defence of his Gloucestershire corps, Captain Sir Christopher Codrington retorted that he had 59 of his 60 man troop in the saddle and in Bristol within eight hours. However, Codrington was unwilling to act without a magistrate outside his own county and, when one was not found, the ill-fated Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Brereton gave him the order to leave.<sup>76</sup> Brereton had already summoned the presence of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dragoons, which begs further questions regarding the value of the Yeomanry in such grave situations. However, ignoring the distance Brereton maintained from the civil authorities, it is still difficult to understand why he turned down additional strength at a time when he had nearly lost control of the city. It should, nevertheless, be stated that the Yeomanry were heavily engaged in bringing order to Bristol in the following days as surrounding corps converged on the city.<sup>77</sup>

Despite these mishaps, it would seem that the final three cases given above were usurped in the public eye by the grave events of the latter two uprisings. Although national media attention appears to have been limited regarding the Welsh

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<sup>73</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 26/07/1850. Vol. 113, Para. 375.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, Para. 374.

<sup>75</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 31/03/1851. Vol. 115, Para. 829.

<sup>76</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Brereton faced a Court Martial for the leniency shown to the rioters in Bristol. He shot himself before its conclusion. 'Q. L.' *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, p. 44; *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 29/07/1850. Vol. 113, Para. 438; and *The Times*, 14/01/1832.

<sup>77</sup> Teichman, 'The Yeomanry as an Aid to the Civil Power', pp. 131-132.

riots, the stories that made public forums were more commonly connected to the bloodshed administered by the 93<sup>rd</sup> Regiment or the supposed causes of the unrest.<sup>78</sup> In Bristol, as has already been hinted at, the vast majority of post-riot reflection was directed towards the conduct of Colonel Brereton, especially with news of his suicide.<sup>79</sup> The parliamentary opposition that drew upon the events came from the usual channels. In a somewhat belated attack, Frederick Berkeley made it known that he, 'was aware how unpopular his opposition must be in an Assembly which numbered among its members a full squadron of yeomanry officers, all bristling with yeomanic valour, and burning with squirarchal indignation that any one should dare to meddle with this pet toy of the landocracy and aristocracy'. He nonetheless attacked them with regard to their failures and paraphrased Dryden's poem, *Cymon and Iphigenia*:

[Mouths without hands] maintained at vast expense;  
In peace a charge, in war a weak defence;  
Stout, once a year, they march, a blustering band;  
And ever, but in times of need, at hand.<sup>80</sup>

As he had predicted, Berkeley's challenge was swiftly rebutted. The debate turned full circle and he was subjected to the spite of four serving yeomen, two inspecting officers, and a former under-secretary of state, and only enjoyed muted support from one other member.<sup>81</sup> Despite the staunch defence, he had asked a number of valid questions of the Yeomanry's efficiency; questions that would become all the more pertinent as the 1850s approached and progressed.

A string of aggressive uprisings in the early 1830s pressed British governments to accept that they could not keep the peace without the availability of a dispersed, localised force. The years between 'Peterloo' and the late 1830s thus

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<sup>78</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 10/06/1831; *The Times*, 06/07/1831; *The Bristol Mercury*, 07/07/1831; and *The Morning Chronicle*, 09/07/1831.

<sup>79</sup> See series titled 'Proceedings at Bristol' and 'Express from Bristol' in *The Times* between November 1831 and January 1832.

<sup>80</sup> The poem should read 'stout once a month'. *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 26/07/1850. Vol. 113, Para. 371 & 375; and Scott, W. *The Works of John Dryden, Volume XI* (Ballantyne, Edinburgh, 1808), p. 466.

<sup>81</sup> Yeomanry officers: Michael Bass (Derby), Henry Edwards (Halifax), Charles Newdegate (Warwickshire North), and Robert Clive (Shropshire South); inspecting officers: Colonel George Reid (Windsor) and Colonel James Chatterton (Cork); Fox Maule was the under-secretary. Ralph Bernal (Middlesex) was the lone voice of support. *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 26/07/1850. Vol. 113, Para. 360-91.

became a golden age in Yeomanry policing despite appearing outwardly disastrous. What is more, the movement for county constabularies would not begin until the end of that decade and would not reach complete fruition until the mid-1850s.<sup>82</sup> The number of Yeomanry went on increasing until 1835 when the figure would peak at the next highest point for the century.

Aside from visible expressions of rebellion, the development of the police was also to be a key influence in determining the size, strength, and role of the Yeomanry. Localism was exceptionally important to provincial society and nowhere was this better exposed than through the policing debates. The counties were predominantly controlled by the wealthy who wielded their power through positions of authority, most notably those of lord lieutenant and magistrate. Although county magnates were rarely to form the backbone of the magistracy in the earlier part of the century, they did make up the lords lieutenancy who subsequently appointed JPs. This, alongside property qualifications, made sure that magistrates were influenced by the propertied classes.<sup>83</sup> Using this system it was possible to maintain the most limited form of police in the ancient parish system, which not only applied little pressure to their wallets, but also kept authority within a small group and, more importantly, within the county. The 1839 'Permissive Act' allowed the same magistrates to opt for a more organised, professional county police force, paid for by the same (if inflated) rates, but it also threatened to tread on the toes of the county administration. Although most control was maintained through quarter sessions and committees, the Home Secretary could not only influence the selection of the chief constable, but could also set the rates of pay within the force. A surprising number of counties found these conditions unfavourable, with only 21 established forces by the end of 1841.<sup>84</sup>

Having been largely averse to any central encroachment, those who opted out found that rural crime followed impunity. Those left without forces after 1839 suffered an influx of vagrant criminals, something a force like the Yeomanry was incapable of dealing with. For example, in Chesterfield, Derbyshire, criminal gangs operating outside the jurisdiction of the borough police, committed crimes without

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<sup>82</sup> Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland*, pp. 443-444.

<sup>83</sup> Quinault, R. 'The Warwickshire County Magistracy and Public Order, c. 1830-1870' in Stevenson, J. & Quinault, R. (eds.) *Popular Protest and Public Order* (St. Martins, New York, 1974), pp. 185-186 & 188.

<sup>84</sup> *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 27/03/1856; and Shakesheff, T. *Rural Conflict, Crime and Protest – Herefordshire, 1800-1860* (Boydell, Suffolk, 2003), pp. 64 & 73.

suffering consequences.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, Somerset magistrates found that rural crime was increasing, something they blamed on the establishment of forces in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire.<sup>86</sup> Although the later 1856 Police Act retained many local controls, the subsidies and government inspectors promised to leach further authority and control from the provinces. Thus, the 'Obligatory Act' weakened the policing monopoly of the provincial elites without giving them an option.

In reality centralisation remained minute. As *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* insisted, some encroachment from the centre had improved the failing services of prisons, asylums, and poor-law administration. As the author went on, 'almost all the improvements of modern times are owing to what some people are pleased to call "centralisation"'.<sup>87</sup> With the authority to exercise the law already invested in them, a force of 'new' officers could deal efficiently with a whole host of crimes that were otherwise beyond the county machinery. It was through arguments like this that central government was able to push the 'model' police onto the counties that had abstained in 1839. There was now a case to enforce the system through the need to tackle vagrant criminals and develop a uniform response to crime and disorder. It would be from these foundations that county forces expanded and later cooperated, effectively making the use of paramilitary forces like the Yeomanry unnecessary.

The Yeomanry had a place in these debates because it was well suited to controlling an un-policed and hierarchical rural society.<sup>88</sup> As one MP stated, 'the old doctrine was, that the people should supply the means of preserving the peace of their own district...because then no object would be pursued which was not in unison with the people's feelings'.<sup>89</sup> A fine argument, as long as the composition of the force is ignored. That said, the Yeomanry played almost no part in day-to-day policing and was usually unveiled only to confront riots. Nonetheless, it certainly made a case for the parsimonious. If the established system could deal with low level crime with a small burden on the rates, then why not rely on a part-time force to tackle more serious events? Better still, this part-time force was remunerated from the centre when called out. As noted, however, newly established rural forces were proving their capabilities in reducing a cross-section of crime, something the old system could never achieve so

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<sup>85</sup> *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 05/01/1856.

<sup>86</sup> *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 27/03/1856.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 141.

<sup>89</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 27/04/1838. Vol. 42, Para. 639.

efficiently. As a result, this empowered the government to roll out similar forces across the country. What kept the Yeomanry relevant where local constables were redundant, however, was the disorder that now confronted the new police.

After the 'Swing' Riots most disorder was urbanised and would lead into the substantial outbursts of Chartism in the late 1830s and 1840s. Table 4.1 gives mixed conclusions regarding the importance of the Yeomanry acting in aid to the civil power in this period. The reasons for the 1827 reductions are made clear: the demand for local military forces was high before the 1820s, but even at the height of their use in 1820, fewer than 30 per cent of counties called out their Yeomanry; by 1827 this was as low as 6 per cent.<sup>90</sup> As shown, this left the country's largest concentration of agricultural labour engaged in intensive farming unchecked. The way in which Figures 4.1 and 4.2 correspond to demonstrate this requires little explanation. Although there are no figures for the 1830s, it is clear that the hasty reversion of the 1827 reductions was undone once more in 1838. This is not to say that the force did not see service after the reform riots: for example, in 1835 and 1837 respectively, the East Kent and Montgomeryshire Yeomanry escorted Poor Law prisoners or dealt with connected riots, whilst the Worcestershire Hussars were called to renewed election disturbances in Birmingham in 1837.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, it is clear that demand waned in line with the lack of violent protest.

The relatively high incidence of calling out the force in the early 1840s hides an apparent shift in official opinion. Although the Yeomanry would see service throughout the Chartist disturbances, they were once again found to be short in number due to the calamitous timing of the recent reductions. Fox Maule would later explain these reductions as having been, 'entirely from a financial consideration, and not from any consideration...that the yeomanry were unfit in point of character and efficiency'; it should not be surprising, however, that the administration in question was Whig.<sup>92</sup> The result of these reductions was that the Yeomanry adopted a reserve position, very similar to the Irish case in the 1820s. When called out it is clear that the

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<sup>90</sup> 65 counties had Yeomanry in 1820; only 19 counties called on them (29.2%). Only four counties called on Yeomanry in 1827 (6.2%). 1819 the figure was under 35%.

<sup>91</sup> *The Leicester Chronicle*, 23/05/1835; and *The Times*, 28/04/1837; 'Q. L.' *The Yeomanry Cavalry of Worcestershire*, p. 52.

<sup>92</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 26/07/1850. Vol. 113, Para. 380.

force added weight to regular soldiers or ‘borrowed’ policeman from one of the newly established constabularies. Rarely would it be trusted with a crowd alone.<sup>93</sup>

Table 4.1: Yeomanry in Aid of the Civil Power in Great Britain, 1818-1855<sup>94</sup>

| <u>Date</u> | <u>No. of Counties</u> | <u>No. of Days on Duty</u> |
|-------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1818        | 7                      | 9                          |
| 1819        | 22                     | 42                         |
| 1820        | 19                     | 52                         |
| 1821        | 3                      | 5                          |
| 1822        | 9                      | 19                         |
| 1823        | 7                      | 13                         |
| 1824        | 2                      | 2                          |
| 1825        | 3                      | 3                          |
| 1826        | 8                      | 16                         |
| 1827        | 4                      | 6                          |
| 1840        | 0                      | 0                          |
| 1841        | 3                      | 6                          |
| 1842        | 15                     | 388                        |
| 1843        | 2                      | 116                        |
| 1845        | N/A                    | 27                         |
| 1847        | N/A                    | 83                         |
| 1848        | N/A                    | 79                         |
| 1855        | 6                      | 35                         |

Table 4.2: Yeomanry in Aid of the Civil Power in Ireland, 1819-1823

| <u>Date</u> | <u>No. of Counties</u> | <u>No. of Days on Duty</u> |
|-------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1819        | 1                      | 1                          |
| 1820        | 1                      | 2                          |
| 1821        | 14                     | 46                         |
| 1822        | 5                      | 10                         |
| 1823        | 1                      | 4                          |

<sup>93</sup> In Llanidloes, Montgomeryshire, the South Salopian and Montgomeryshire Yeomanry held themselves ready as London and local police attempted deal with the Chartist uprising. *The Times*, 03/05/1839; Similar events took place in Birmingham (*The Times*, 18/07/1839) and Welshpool (*The Times*, 19/07/1839).

<sup>94</sup> *BPP*: 273, 1828; *BPP*: 128, 1844; *BPP*: 370, 1854-55; *The Times*, 20/03/1850; and Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland*, pp. 284 & 463.

The climactic events of the 1840s coincided with policing developments already outlined, which saw forces raised in the northern cities and in some counties.<sup>95</sup> This unarmed expansion of the civil power strengthened the position of the anti-Yeomanry lobby, which saw their role as having been superseded. These aversions remained in spite of the state of the country and it would seem that the Whigs shared with Major-General Sir Charles James Napier – military governor of the northern district during the Chartist crisis – some fear of a repeat performance of 1819 should the force be employed. Unlike the agricultural riots, there could be dangerous political ramifications for employing a perceived Tory force against reform rioters; given the state of the country, these ramifications were likely to be far more serious than anything experienced in 1819. As a result, when magistrates requested that Napier call upon the Yeomanry in August 1839 he supposedly uttered the immortal lines, ‘if the Chartists want a fight, they can be indulged without Yeomen, who are over-zealous for cutting and slashing’.<sup>96</sup>

As a result of similar feelings, the Rotherham troop of Yorkshire Yeomanry played no direct part in quelling a serious disturbance on the North Midland Railway in October 1838. Instead of facing the disturbance they stood the ground outside the Court House until the return of the magistrates when they were relieved by a detachment of artillery from Sheffield. Considering that their presence would have had a detrimental effect on the crowd, they were held in reserve and the crowd was dispersed with the Riot Act.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, the Yeomanry were not involved in the ill-fated uprising at Newport in November 1839, the closest corps being in Gloucester, nearly 50 miles away.<sup>98</sup> Although it is clear that some in authority worried about the use of Yeomanry, the press also reflected on their impact on crowds. As the *Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser* noted on the appearance of the county Yeomanry during the Chartist agitation in Birmingham in 1839:

We deeply regret the necessity of this step, as we are of the opinion that the appearance of the yeomanry on the scene of action may produce an

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<sup>95</sup> Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland*, pp. 438-440 & 442.

<sup>96</sup> Fellows, *History of the South Notts. Yeomanry Cavalry*, p. 35; and Napier, Lieutenant -General Sir W. *The Life and Opinions of General Sir Charles James Napier, Vol. II* (John Murray, London, 1857), p. 72.

<sup>97</sup> *The Times*, 15/10/1838.

<sup>98</sup> See the series of reports in *The Times* between 06/11/1839-25/01/1840 titled ‘Newport Riots’.

increase of irritation in the excited people, while the latter might be kept in subjection by regular troops.<sup>99</sup>

Although it was later suggested that the force received a warm reception from the respectable members of the town, it has been suggested by Quinault that the people of autonomous boroughs objected to the interference of a county force.<sup>100</sup> Despite this, the same regiment would be used during the colliers' strike in Coventry in 1842, prompting the press to state that:

The Warwickshire Yeomanry have just rode into the city. Their appearance has been the signal for agitation. As they passed along the street they were shouted, groaned and hissed at in the most violent manner. Whoever have advised their appearance have acted most unwisely.<sup>101</sup>

Despite being clearly eschewed by the authorities, press, and people in some areas, in others the establishment was not sensitive to political or local tensions. In an altogether ignored paragraph of Napier's biography he stated that, 'the difficulty is, that where there are no soldiers the magistrates must have yeomanry; for they have no means of their own'.<sup>102</sup> The significance of this statement cannot be overlooked and was the very problem faced in the Potteries and North Wales in 1839. In both cases local police could not contain the violence, and the Staffordshire and Shropshire and Montgomeryshire Regiments endured particularly vicious engagements with crowds, the first of which saw casualties amongst the Staffordshire corps. Not relieved by regular soldiers for two days, this regiment endured stoning, serious falls, and injuries to horses. The Yeomanry would, nonetheless, exact a price from the crowd in Newcastle-under-Lyme, shooting four men dead and wounding at least forty-three others.<sup>103</sup> What happened in Staffordshire and Wales was shocking, especially as the escalation was connected to the presence of the 'new' police in the district. The actions of the Yeomanry, however, were not comparable to 'Peterloo' and, despite further deaths at their hands, they metered out their retaliation only after considerable

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<sup>99</sup> *The Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser*, 06/07/1839.

<sup>100</sup> *The Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser*, 27/07/1839; and Quinault, 'The Warwickshire County Magistracy and Public Order', p. 210.

<sup>101</sup> *The Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser*, 22/08/1842.

<sup>102</sup> Napier, *The Life and Opinions of General Sir Charles James Napier, Vol. II*, p. 73.

<sup>103</sup> *The Times*, 13/05/1839.



provocation and under the orders of magistrates. It was the magistracy's blessing that remained central to the decision making process and subsequent actions; if the Yeomanry used their brains, it was to stay in line with the law rather than outfox a crowd.

Elsewhere evidence of comparable violence is rare, but it is apparent that the magistracy maintained a significant reliance. For instance, after the riots in the Staffordshire during the summer of 1842, one contemporary – if partisan – commentator noted, 'but for the presence of the Yeomanry, we have every reason to believe that the complete social disorganization of the northern part of the country would have been inevitable'.<sup>104</sup> Equally significant, in Scotland as late as 1854 the then Home Secretary Lord Palmerston had questioned why the Royal Midlothian Yeomanry's return had shown 100 men absent with leave. He was informed that their colonel had excused them from the duty because of recent extensive service in aid of the civil power.<sup>105</sup> As might be expected, the use of the Yeomanry varied in line with the distribution of regular forces and police, but as Table 4.1 shows, the force still accumulated a total of more than 500 days on duty between 1841 and 1843. Whatever Whig governments thought of their capabilities or political affiliations, and whatever the state of the increasingly professional police forces, there continued to be times when little else was available.

As the 'Swing' Riots had shown, a force capable of rapid deployment could be the difference between prevention and cure. The failure of counties to raise (or re-raise) a Yeomanry force soon enough failed to check rioters and the slow follow up of the regular forces did little to inspire fear of confrontation. It is in this respect that Gilks has failed to understand the importance of localism and dormancy. Although the Yeomanry was no 'quasi-police', the fact that it operated locally and relatively infrequently is evidence of its strengths.<sup>106</sup> Certain members of the establishment – such as Lord John Russell – had identified that the strength of the force was acting as a latent deterrent. It was hoped that the knowledge of their presence would be enough to discourage civil disobedience. Nonetheless, it was also the view of many that actually calling on the Yeomanry was, 'more likely to continue the ill-will and dissension in different parts of the community, than the calling in of the regular

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<sup>104</sup> Webster, *The Records of the Queen's Own Royal Regiment of Staffordshire Yeomanry*, pp. 143-144.

<sup>105</sup> NAS, GD224/1030/7. Letter: Duke of Buccleuch to Lord Palmerston 06/01/1854.

<sup>106</sup> Gilks, 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry', pp. 171-173.

force'.<sup>107</sup> It seems that when they were called upon later in the century it was hoped to keep them from direct confrontation in the areas from which they were raised. Alfred Illingworth explained these contradictory circumstances to the House of Commons in 1883:

Nine out of every ten...[members] regarded the Yeomanry as an ally of the Civil power in case of an outbreak amongst the people...the great mass of the people of the country [however] looked with great disfavour and suspicion upon the force.<sup>108</sup>

It would seem that presence was used as a weapon for keeping the peace into the middle of the century. Although it was known that its mobilisation might subsequently generate anger within a crowd, on any number of occasions there was no other option.

Beckett has identified the last date of Yeomanry service in aid of the civil power to be November 1867 when two troops of the Devon Yeomanry were used to support the authorities during the food riots in the city of Exeter.<sup>109</sup> Surprisingly, however, demands for their services can be found to stretch as far as 1885. During the General Election that year, several troops of the North Somerset Yeomanry came out alongside local and special constables at Midsomer Norton and Farrington Gurney to preserve order in what was considered 'a very rough district'.<sup>110</sup> Ignoring this event, however, there is no need to alter Beckett's conclusions: yeomen would rarely come up against their fellow citizens in open conflict after the mid-1850s.<sup>111</sup> By this time the Yeomanry's key strength had become its Achilles' heel. Whilst localisation obviously lent itself to speedy deployment against local tumult, the men in uniform were identified and associated with the causes of turmoil through class, politics or employment. As popular movements gained wider support and the likely commotion took on a more daunting scale, the Yeomanry alone would not suffice as a deterrent or solution, in part due to its size, in part due to the nature of its composition.

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<sup>107</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 03/05/1838. Vol. 42, Para. 819-20.

<sup>108</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 24/05/1883. Vol. 279, Para. 871.

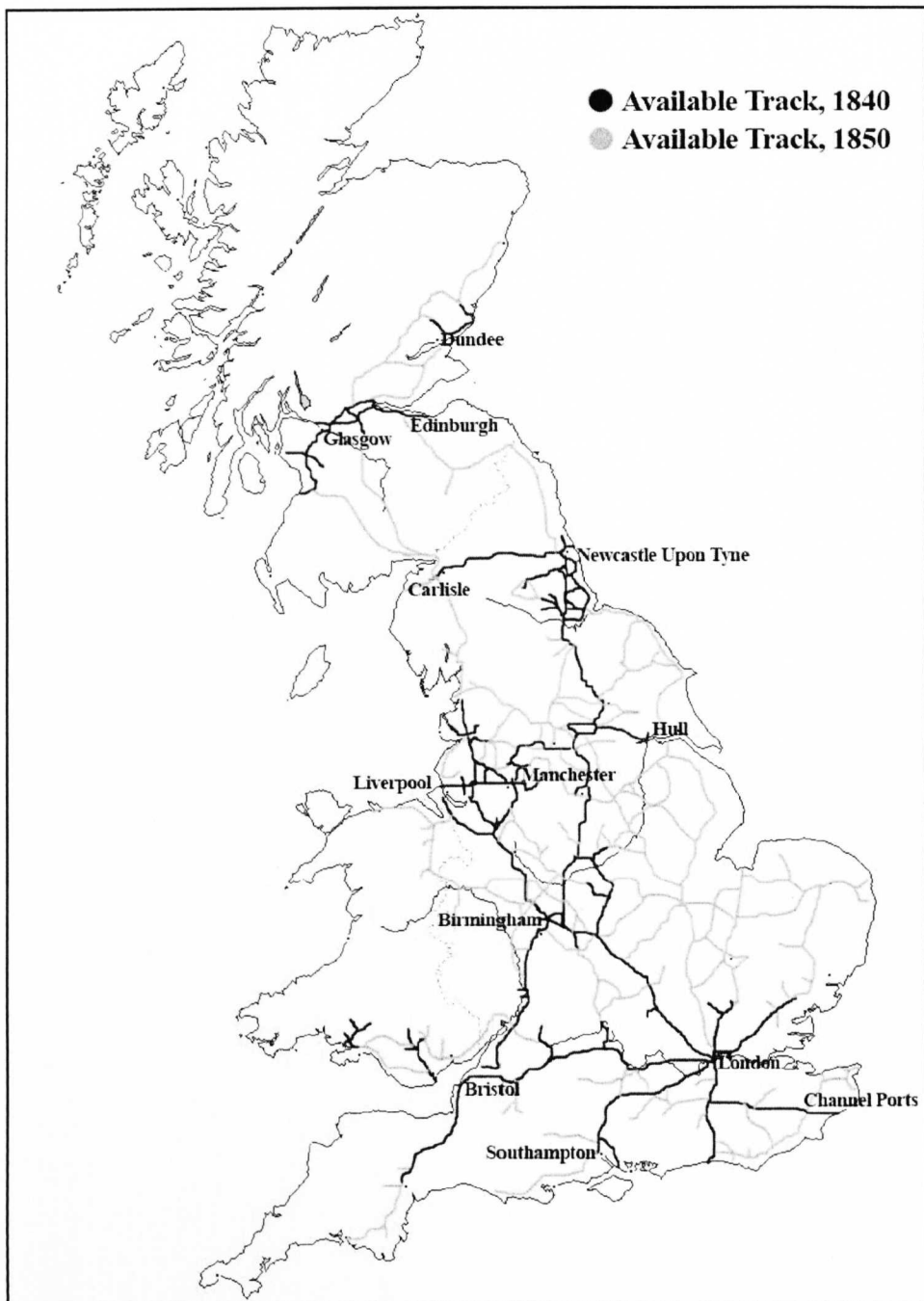
<sup>109</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 192.

<sup>110</sup> *Western Mail*, 10/12/1885. One of the Lancashire regiments was also out during the 1878 Cotton Riots at Preston. *Daily News*, 18/05/1878.

<sup>111</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 192.

To add further weight to the Yeomanry's declining importance, Figure 4.3 provides details of railway development through the 1840s and 1850s. This period witnessed a transformation in the fledgling network, with at least 4,500 miles of track laid in the decade. Between this date and 1875 a further 8,500 miles opened up the country further, with few inhabited areas without coverage.<sup>112</sup>

Figure 4.3: Approximate Growth of the British Rail Network<sup>113</sup>



<sup>112</sup> Freeman & Aldcroft, *The Atlas of British Railway History*, pp. 21 & 33.

<sup>113</sup> Compiled from Freeman, M. & Aldcroft, D. *The Atlas of British Railway History*. (Routledge, 1988), pp. 14 & 20.

The increasing ease with which the authorities could call on regular support made a local force less significant, and by 1870 Edward Cardwell would only support the Yeomanry vote because of the absence of conscription rather than their ability to aid the civil power. By 1875 even the Inspectors of Auxiliary Cavalry agreed that the railway had voided the force's constabulary role.<sup>114</sup> Such observations were compounded by the increasing success of the Police Act of 1856 which not only made county constabularies a legal requirement, but also ensured that they continued to grow in strength.

With the growth of police forces and the increasing cooperation between them through section 25 of the 1890 Police Act, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the need for military force in policing should have been nonexistent.<sup>115</sup> As the first chapter has shown, this undoubtedly played a part in the Yeomanry's subjection to three investigative committees, the last of which in 1892 finally stated that its constitution should be 'specially adapted' to embrace home defence as the main object of its existence.<sup>116</sup>

Despite its new focus, it is surprising to note that magistrates maintained the power to call out the Yeomanry in aid of the civil power until 1907.<sup>117</sup> On top of this, lords lieutenant could mobilise the Yeomanry until 1871 when the power was invested in the Home Secretary, and the right of the High Sheriff to do the same was never properly repealed.<sup>118</sup> This resulted in the localisation of civil power and judicial authority within a self-regulating and extremely limited group of men. What made this situation more constitutionally troubling was the way the Yeomanry was utilised as a mechanism of law. As has been shown in earlier chapters, the social composition of the rank and file of the Yeomanry lent itself to acting alongside the wealthier sections of British society as both had a position to maintain and much to lose. At the top end of the institution, there was also a remarkable cross-over between judicial officers and the sharp end of the law. County magistrates had many duties, but most important of all was their role in maintaining order. The composition of the county magistracy in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century leant particularly in favour of the squirearchy – more than 75 per cent in 1842, falling to not far below 70 per cent by 1887 – also the

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<sup>114</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 09/06/1870. Vol. 201, Para. 1839; and Colonel Edward Seager and Colonel Oakes. Stanley Committee, 1875, pp. 55 & 99.

<sup>115</sup> *The Times*, 24/07/1908.

<sup>116</sup> Brownlow Committee, 1892, pp. 9-10.

<sup>117</sup> *Manual of Military Law, 1907*, pp. 219 & 205.

<sup>118</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, 21/06/1872. Vol. 212, Para. 2-6.

preferred recruiting ground for Yeomanry officers.<sup>119</sup> As chapter three showed, there was significant cross-over. To some degree this party of order appears to challenge the very same English liberties that were supposedly threatened by the establishment of a regular constabulary. It was clearly a tool for maintaining order and one that could lend itself to the violent repression of anti-establishment forces. It was, nonetheless, largely in the hands of the county magistracy, made up of the local population, and was usually only wheeled out to support the civil power in cases of emergency. Unlike the constabularies established under the 1839 Act, the Home Secretary had only negligible control over senior Yeomanry appointments and thus more authority was withheld in the provinces.

Whilst this placated the concerns of the magistracy, it hardly protected the civilian population from the abuse of power. What did, however, was the *ad-hoc* nature of British administration and law that made the decision to use force extremely difficult. Such a decision might just as easily lead to the prosecution of magistrates and soldiers, as it had in the aftermath of the 'Massacre of St. George's Fields' in 1768.<sup>120</sup> Contrary to the popular historical view of their clumsy bloodthirstiness, the result was a typical reluctance to use armed force on many occasions and, when it was used, it was only through the power of a magistrate. Despite the often dual responsibilities of the Yeomanry's officership, there seems to be no clear examples of men fulfilling the two roles on a single occasion to deal with a crowd, though there is more than one example of them refusing to act without a magistrate. This had been the case at Bristol, Sherborne and the castle at Nottingham in 1831, where on all three occasions a crowd was allowed to continue unmolested by the Yeomanry despite seriously infringing the law.<sup>121</sup> In perhaps the most interesting example of the three, Lieutenant Cox of the 1<sup>st</sup> Troop Dorset Yeomanry did not consider himself justified in firing the ball cartridge he had issued without a magistrate, whatever the crowd's actions. On this occasion the Yeomanry proved itself capable of more than wanton violence as the crowd was eventually cleared after discussions with the captain. Furthermore, the regiment changed its training grounds from Sherborne to Dorchester the following year, clearly understanding the danger of antagonism and poor public

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<sup>119</sup> Zangerl, C. H. E. 'The Social Composition of the County Magistracy in England and Wales, 1831-1887' *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1971, p. 115.

<sup>120</sup> Emsley, 'The Military and Popular Disorder in England', p. 11.

<sup>121</sup> Fellows, *History of the South Notts. Yeomanry Cavalry*, p. 31.

relations. As has been shown, however, on others its presence alone could still compound problems.<sup>122</sup>

For the most part violent repression without magisterial support was always avoided by the Yeomanry, at least in part due to the danger of feeling the weight of the law themselves. Indeed, even at St. Peter's Field they had acted with a magistrate's consent. After questioning the actions of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry, *The Times* went on to state, 'the respect entertained for the Magistracy springs from their connexion with...the laws [and] the Magistrate who abandons the laws prescribe to him is...the most dangerous and offensive enemy which the state can harbour in its bosom.'<sup>123</sup> Perhaps through fear of this sort of corruption, in the event of a death at the Yeomanry's hands there were reflective inquests. Nonetheless, most examples reliably returned verdicts of 'justifiable homicide', with even the perpetrators of 'Peterloo' not held to account.<sup>124</sup> It is of course obvious that deaths captured the public imagination more readily than injuries, but it is clear that the latter was the more common outcome of a *mêlée*.<sup>125</sup> What is clear is that the Yeomanry did not often act violently without provocation and the authority of a magistrate. This is not to excuse the level of force sometimes used – something probably resulting from a lack of training – but to suggest that yeomen themselves did not simply kill or maim to keep the lower orders out of a vote. To make a more morally contentious comparison, it is clear that they showed no greater contempt for human life than regular soldiers performing the same duty. For example, they certainly could not claim gruesome acts of repression like the 14<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons who beheaded two men in Bristol in 1831.<sup>126</sup> Despite an unusual and overlapping position within local administration, it seems for the most part that the Yeomanry rarely acted beyond the bounds of the law.

The ending of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was not to be the end of the Yeomanry's intrinsic policing qualities. As chapter five will demonstrate, one of the government's intentions in mobilising civilians for service in South Africa was the hope that some

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<sup>122</sup> The Sherborne riots took place in Dorset in October 1831. Letter: Lieutenant Cox to Lieutenant-Colonel Frampton 26/10/1831. Thompson, *Records of the Dorset Yeomanry*, pp. 124 & 127.

<sup>123</sup> *The Times*, 17/09/1819.

<sup>124</sup> This was the case at after deaths at Wellington in Shropshire. Graham, *The Annals of the Yeomanry Cavalry of Wiltshire, Vol. I*, pp. 79-80; and *The Times*, 09/09/1819.

<sup>125</sup> During the Swing riots the Wiltshire Yeomanry shot one man dead for hitting a trooper and left a man without a hand and another with significant head injuries. *Ibid*, p. 81.

<sup>126</sup> Teichman, 'The Yeomanry as an Aid to the Civil Power, 1795-1867', p. 133.

would settle and form a strong and stable expatriate community. However, Major-General Robert Baden-Powell had further enticed serving Imperial Yeomen to join the South African Constabulary to encourage this stability. At home, the turn of the century also brought increasing confrontation with domestic labour movements and trade unionists. To the alarm of some, there was even a return to 19<sup>th</sup> century riot control in the form of the military. At one level this was due to limitations of police forces and the fact that the army was better suited to riot control, but in some cases it was clear that magistrates and chief constables showed a preference for military forces.<sup>127</sup> This raised consternation in parliament, particularly as it seemed that the 1907 Territorial and Reserve Forces Act had allowed for the use of volunteers in policing, raising concerns about conflicts of interest. As a result Haldane outlined the limitations of this commitment in March 1908 – Territorial Forces could intervene through Common Law, like any other citizen – whilst the Home Secretary, Herbert Gladstone, agreed to set up an inquiry into the use of soldiers in industrial disturbances.<sup>128</sup> With the findings of the 1893 Featherstone inquiry still ringing in their ears, this 1908 Select Committee (*Employment of the Military in Cases of Disturbance*) noted that Chief Constables should be encouraged to pursue a civil response and introduced another layer to the process of requisitioning troops.<sup>129</sup> At the same time it also highlighted the failure of inter-force cooperation, suggesting that only one third of police forces in England and Wales had made arrangements. Most interestingly, however, the report went on to suggest that chief constables should maintain the power to enlist temporarily men with, ‘knowledge of cavalry and Yeomanry duties’.<sup>130</sup> The committee had found a method of combining traditional Yeomanry responsibilities with those of special constables. A mounted policeman undoubtedly holds a greater intimidation value than one on foot, but in the autumn of 1910 constabulary inspectors reported that a number of forces had inadequate or nonexistent mounted capacity.<sup>131</sup> As a mounted special constable, the yeoman was politically acceptable as long as he was out of uniform.

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<sup>127</sup> Morgan, J. *Conflict and Order – The Police and Labour Disputes in England and Wales 1900-1939* (OUP, 1987), p. 38.

<sup>128</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 05/03/1908. Vol. 185, Para. 927-929 & 936-937.

<sup>129</sup> Morgan, *Conflict and Order*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>130</sup> *BPP*: 236, 1908: Report of the Select Committee on Employment of Military in Cases of Disturbances.

<sup>131</sup> *BPP*: 64, 1911: Reports of H.M. Inspectors of Constabulary, 1910.

These debates, however, were overshadowed by the industrial violence between 1910 and 1914. From the drawn out mining disputes of South Wales in 1910 to the enormous Liverpool transport workers strike of the following year, there emerged a wider, more unified labour movement. Although on occasion the authorities attempted to avoid the use of the armed forces, they became increasingly important in breaking strikes.<sup>132</sup> As Barbara Weinberger has shown, by this time the Home Office and War Office wanted wrongdoers tried rather than overawed by force, with the police applying the law rather than the army imposing order. However, the distance between the provinces and the Home Office did not lend itself to unified direction, especially when chief constables differed in their approach. For example, Captain Lionel Lindsay of Glamorgan Constabulary enjoyed considerable freedom in his decision making capacity, far more than any borough counterpart who answered to a watch committee. Having trained with the Egyptian gendarmerie, his approach to dealing with the Welsh coal strikes was to rely on intimidation and force. When Lindsay requested the support of soldiers, however, they would come under Home Office direction, controlled by Churchill's appointment (General Nevil Macready), and with the accompaniment of 500 Metropolitan policemen.<sup>133</sup>

With the motive of weaning local authorities off their reliance on the military, it proved to be largely successful, though this triumph came at the expense of localism. Welcome or not, some central intervention was to become a condition of Metropolitan police aid, something that would develop into a central police response to large scale labour disputes. Despite this progressive approach to bolstering police numbers, the armed forces were still used in support and this reached a climax under Winston Churchill's tenure at the Home Office between 1910 and 1911. Although he – influenced by Haldane – had initially resisted sending soldiers to Wales in favour of police, this tumultuous pre-war period repeatedly saw military forces controlled from the centre without requisition of the civil power.<sup>134</sup> It is important to note, however, that auxiliary forces were never mobilised in this manner.

Though the government no longer asked for their support, yeomen were more than willing to offer their services in other ways. In December 1910 the 'Yeomanry Old Comrades' Association' placed an advertisement for new members in *The Times*

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<sup>132</sup> Morgan, *Conflict and Order*, pp. 17-18 & 277.

<sup>133</sup> Weinberger, B. *Keeping the Peace? Policing Strikes in Britain, 1906-1926* (Berg, Oxford, 1991), pp. 40-41, & 52.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 52 & 62-64; and Morgan, *Conflict and Order*, p. 277.



and stated one of its objectives as being the centralisation of ex-yeomen who might be drawn on in times of emergency.<sup>135</sup> Whilst this did not quite allude to the intention of offering their services to the civil power, a similar plea in the summer of the following year was far less ambiguous. In a published letter to the editor of *The Times* the association stated that, 'the committee consider that the present crisis calls for the services of trained men, and therefore appeal to all ex-Yeomen willing to assist the authorities in preserving the peace to forward their names and addresses without delay.' If the response was sufficient the association was to place itself at the disposal of the civil authorities to provide mounted special constables, effectively in line with the findings of the previously mentioned 1908 Select Committee.<sup>136</sup> Although it is practically impossible to identify whether the offer was taken up, Territorial officers were certainly involved in organising and commanding special constables during the Merseyside strikes of 1911.<sup>137</sup>

To the regret of the authorities, the First World War only heightened industrial malcontent. As Peter Dennis has shown, in the wake of the conflict a combination of factors began to rouse discontent.<sup>138</sup> Police forces had been heavily depleted during the war and it would be the armed forces alone that were capable of answering the January 1919 Glasgow strikes. Military authorities, however, were quick to point out that these troops were of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> line quality and ill-disciplined.<sup>139</sup> Further concern would then be raised with the expiry of the Military Service Act and the conflicting manpower demands of potential civil support and foreign commitments to empire and occupation.<sup>140</sup> One answer to these looming questions was to bolster civilian and military forces with the re-established Territorial Army. However, whilst Winston Churchill remained enthusiastic to put Territorials to use in this historic role, others saw immediate and long term dangers to the force and public loyalty.<sup>141</sup> To appear politically palatable to all the reconstitution of the Territorial Army would have to support the authorities in the protection of lives and property without appearing paramilitary or anti-trade unionist.

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<sup>135</sup> *The Times*, 03/12/1910.

<sup>136</sup> *The Times*, 19/08/1911.

<sup>137</sup> *The Times*, 19/08/1911.

<sup>138</sup> Dennis, P. 'The Territorial Army in Aid of the Civil Power in Britain, 1919-1926' *Journal of Contemporary History*. Vol. 16, No. 4, 1981, p. 706.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 706-707.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 707 & 709.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, p. 721.

The Miners Strike of April 1921 presented a significant problem in this respect. The Territorial machinery had to some extent managed to hide their involvement in augmenting the 'Defence Force' that countered the dispute, but it had appealed directly to its members and had been raised through the existing Territorial infrastructure.<sup>142</sup> By temporarily resigning from one to join the other, the government veiled the use of the Territorial Army in aid of the civil power, but not particularly convincingly. In one of the more obvious examples, the recently reformed South Nottinghamshire Hussars transferred *en masse* to form the 'South Nottinghamshire Hussars (Defence Force)' and continued to wear 'SNH' on their shoulders as well as their regimental badge.<sup>143</sup> This system was attempted again during the 1926 General Strike with the Civil Constabulary Reserve and with similar results. Though it was desirable to give the illusion of a division between the Territorials and policing, the fact that a number of Yeomanry regiments were the first cavalry to be mechanised in the British army made them particularly useful. Once more identified as having the right skills and tools for the job, it was the armoured cars of the Sharpshooters' that escorted goods inland from the London docks and it might be assumed that few failed to identify them.<sup>144</sup>

Although it is difficult to single out the Yeomanry within Dennis' examples, in light of the efforts of the Old Comrades' Association, it seems logical that many yeomen wanted to help and appreciated their strength in this role. The use of the Sharpshooters' armoured cars is particularly telling, but, as chapter three shows, class remained a factor. Nonetheless, after these awkward attempts to use the Territorial Army in the 1920s, the prospect was laid to rest after the Trade Disputes Act of 1927 and in the following decade when the Annual Review of Imperial Defence found that it would no longer be expedient to utilise military forces in aid of the civil power.<sup>145</sup>

It has not been the purpose of this chapter to debate the higher moral issues of suppressing popular movements seeking political reform; rightly or wrongly, the policy of 19th century administrations was to follow an incremented democratisation and not to tolerate 'revolutionary' change. It also has not been the intention to outline every occasion that the Yeomanry was called out in aid of the civil power, nor to

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid, p. 714.

<sup>143</sup> Fellows & Freeman, *Historical Records of the South Nottinghamshire Hussars Yeomanry*, p. 297.

<sup>144</sup> See photographs of the Sharpshooters' 'Peerless' armoured cars. Mollo, B. *The Sharpshooters, 1900-2000* (Allan Printing, Hershaw, 2000), p. 26.

<sup>145</sup> Dennis, 'The Territorial Army in Aid of the Civil Power', p. 722.

highlight or emphasise its failures. What is provided is an analysis of the most prominent and perception shaping events. It would be both impossible and irrelevant to cover all the 'success' stories here as their continued existence speaks volumes on their necessity in this respect. What their failures show, however, is the difficult and varied path to investment and belief in the county constabulary system.

Given the extensive examples of the Yeomanry Cavalry acting as an auxiliary constabulary, it is clear that it cannot simply be considered a subplot to the national policing story. The period running from 1794 until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was undeniably an age of popular protest in Great Britain, yet its nature was multifaceted, exhibiting two different experiences. In England, Scotland and Wales this protest was, generally speaking, rarely violent. At times the government response to crowds was strong, but such responses pale in comparison to the violence and repression witnessed on both sides in Ireland. Perhaps even more significantly, there was no reflection of the brutality shown by European paramilitary police forces or the crude and bloody use of the army in French labour disturbances, such as the coal strike of 1907-1908.<sup>146</sup> As Stanley Palmer has shown, the variations in disorder across the United Kingdom provide an answer to the different directions taken in the development of police forces; something intrinsically linked to the existence and use of the Yeomanry. In Ireland, where it openly exhibited sectarianism and brutality, it was wound up in the 1830s when it became politically viable to do so. In its place a less partisan civil force was established to deal with the unique circumstances of that country. In the other parts of the UK, where the force was not fuelled by repression and counter-violence, it existed in parallel to a slowly developing constabulary system that could not cope alone before the 1850s. This was largely acceptable in Britain because the Yeomanry had usually behaved itself throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the glaring exception of 'Peterloo'. Blackstock has shown how 19<sup>th</sup> century sectarian polarisation in Ireland ensured intense feelings on all sides and the high risk of, 'panic reactions' by yeomen and crowds.<sup>147</sup> As Palmer noted, the Irish Yeomanry subsequently came to an end because they treated most occasions as 'Peterloos'.<sup>148</sup>

For much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century only the regular army was capable of usurping the Yeomanry from its public order duties. Nonetheless, the Yeomanry was not a

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<sup>146</sup> Here the army killed 20 people and injured another 600 whilst the authorities dished out 104 years worth of prison sentences. Morgan, *Conflict and Order*, p. 280.

<sup>147</sup> Blackstock, A. *An Ascendancy Army*, p. 251.

<sup>148</sup> Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland*, p. 520.

police force. Crime and protest are different things and, until the constabulary system increased its manpower in the 1850s, the civil and military establishments were likely to have to join forces in times of emergency. Although it is difficult to gauge contemporary feeling towards the Yeomanry when on duty, it is clear that they were often disliked in a way that regular soldiers were not, and this was more pronounced in some independent boroughs. As with any problem, prevention of riot was always preferable to controlling it, and public knowledge of 'Peterloo' undoubtedly aided the principle of 'Policing by presence'. Though it concerned some civilians – and terrified many in authority – it would seem that on mainland Britain the Yeomanry was more likely to show constraint than use arms after the events of 1819. Where they did, the significance of magisterial backing was fully understood.

Despite these conclusions, the Yeomanry should not be considered the infallible friend of magistrates. In some districts corps could not always be relied upon to stay within the law themselves. The Queen's Own Royal Staffordshire Yeomanry were particularly spirited during their camp evenings, first leading to a complaint in 1874 from the Chief Constable at Stafford about the 'drunk and riotous' behaviour of armed men at Abbots Bromley. Worse still, the same corps caused a national media storm between 12 and 18 June 1884 when they disfigured a statue of Dr Johnson and brought havoc to the streets of Litchfield.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, the force was not unquestionably reliable when it came to enforcing the law. It showed sympathy for Swing rioters, Queen Caroline's supporters, and even reform protesters.<sup>150</sup> Nonetheless, the controversy born out of the fact that they were often pitched against another class is hard to escape. This, however, was unlikely to have ever been an act of 'class war' by a Tory institution. Instead it defended the political system and status quo and worked in the interest of both established political parties as a result. Selfish it might have been, but it did not choose to subdue the working-class; it was the threat to their interests and property – at times blended with the

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<sup>149</sup> SRO, D1300/2/1. Letter: Captain P. Webster Adj. to Chief Constable, Stafford, 22/10/1874; *Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, 17/06/1884. Vol. 289, Para. 550-2; *The Illustrated Police News*, 28/06/1884; *The Midland Counties Evening Express*, C. 06/1884; *The Times*, 20/06/1884 & 25/08/1884; SRO, D (W)1781/19/6/16, 14 & 9; *The Dundee Courier & Argus*, 20/06/1885; *The Bury and Norwich Post*, *Suffolk Herald*, 23/06/1885; and *Birmingham Daily Post*, 22/06/1886

<sup>150</sup> *Trewhman's Exeter Flying Post*, 19/08/1819; CKS, U840/0236/3: Circular to Justices of the Peace, 08/12/1830; *The Times*, 15/12/1865; Diary of Barclay, A. K. in Harrison-Ainsworth, E. D. *History and War Records of the Surrey (QMR) Yeomanry, 1797-1928* (Layton, London, 1928); and Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 137.

encouragement of a landlord – that motivated men. After all, if the Yeomanry did not support magistrates then the regular army would have.

In 1797 Lord Melville noted:

If the form and substance of this constitution is to be protected against the various combinations forming to disturb both, it must in a great measure depend on our being able to raise and keep up in the country after the establishment of peace the spirit of Yeomanry Corps, and thereby forming a connexion between the gentlemen of rank and the Yeomanry.<sup>151</sup>

In 1803 he reiterated this point more widely by noting that the volunteer movement put men in uniform who would then serve the state's interest.<sup>152</sup> J. R. Western made the same observation, showing the connection between volunteer participation and anti-revolutionary ideals during the French Revolutionary Wars.<sup>153</sup> As Lord Melville recognised, however, the Yeomanry promised to bond the middle-class to the political classes, providing more desirable characteristics. 'Living in the country and not infected with the poison of the large towns', the Yeomanry was to be reliable through construction.<sup>154</sup> Its anti-revolutionary credentials were as much a reflection of central policy as they were a result of the unavoidable conditions of membership.

Nothing says more about the importance of the Yeomanry to policing than the number of days it spent on duty between 1818 and 1855. Even without figures for the 1830s it can still be said that the force spent cumulatively at least 960 days on duty: approximately 26 days a year for this 37-year period.<sup>155</sup> However inefficient or compromised it might have been, these figures show the Yeomanry was a vital part of the country's internal defence. 'Peterloo' was a touchstone for the Yeomanry's critics well into the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It certainly earned and deserved vilification for that day as well as the echoes of this incompetence that came later. However, apart from the loss of the Manchester and Salford Corps, it failed to spoil public relations more widely. Participation continued – even grew – just as its role in maintaining order persisted. Though its use was controversial, it was the product of a system rather

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<sup>151</sup> NAS, GD51/1/887/1. Copy of letter: Lord Melville to Duke of Buccleuch, 10/06/1797.

<sup>152</sup> NAS, GD364/1/1136. Copy of letter: Lord Melville to General Vyse, 14/07/1803.

<sup>153</sup> Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', pp. 603-614.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> See table 4.1.

than a political ideology. Given the importance of its role in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, it deserves more than a passing reference as a tool of oppression.

## Chapter V

### South Africa, 1899-1902

In 1899 the Yeomanry Cavalry remained a home defence force, only recently included in a general mobilisation scheme in the early 1890s.<sup>1</sup> Very little had changed in its organisation and, though the National Defence Act of 1888 made it liable for service anywhere in the United Kingdom, statutes did not allow for yeomen to leave home shores. As has already been shown, however, debates regarding the Yeomanry's relevance became increasingly common in parliament and public forums, not least because of its declining membership. Nonetheless, when Black Week exposed the shortcomings of the British army in South Africa, General Sir Redvers Buller demanded a more mobile force to combat the Boers. With a background commanding irregular horse in the African campaigns of the late 1870s, Buller understood the advantage of such forces, despite the nature of his South African defeats.<sup>2</sup> Amongst those who filled the vacuum was the Imperial Yeomanry, providing three contingents over the course of the war. This chapter will address these foreign service elements by looking at its organisation, social composition, motivations, and operational performance, whilst comparing it to its home service counterpart.

The open expanse of the veldt made mobility crucial in South Africa, something that became increasingly significant when the Boers abandoned the conventional offensive early in the war. The British were not well prepared for this eventuality. Since the late 1880s small detachments of mounted infantrymen had been formed from regular infantry battalions who came together on mobilisation, but they were modest in size and were not capable of countering Boer tactics alone. The British regular cavalry had entered the war outnumbered five to one and suffered continuously from insufficient supplies. This made it hard to keep their highly-strung horses in condition, whilst the fighting asked questions of their tactics. Stephen Badsey has argued that these tactics found some success and that the cavalry was capable of operating dismounted, but it remained a small elite not ideally suited to the environment. As a result, Roberts supported improvised Mounted Infantry and riflemen on the basis that it would quickly create a large mobile force to fight out of

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter one.

<sup>2</sup> Beckett, I. F. W. 'Buller, Sir Redvers Henry' (*ODNB*, OUP, 2008), [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32165>, accessed 10/12/2009].

the saddle. Extreme horse wastage subsequently became an issue, largely because of poor handling, but it was a price worth paying for the advantage of greater mobility.<sup>3</sup> Amongst the irregular contingents that were raised for the purpose was the Imperial Yeomanry. A number of 'Army Orders' would organise three overseas contingents under this banner, based on voluntary enlistment from the ranks of the Home Yeomanry, Rifle Volunteers, and the enthusiastic public. Unfortunately, despite the prognostic warning of one Yeomanry Committee member regarding the hasty deployment of civilians, training was generally insufficient and the results were mixed at best.<sup>4</sup>

Although the Yeomanry was not the only auxiliary force to fight in South Africa, they could claim to be the first. The City Imperial Volunteers were sanctioned to raise 1,000 men on 20 December 1899 and saw the earliest fighting of all the large bodies of auxiliaries landing in the new year, but they did not fire the first shots. On 5 November 1899 a detachment of the East Kent Mounted Rifles set sail for active service in South Africa, clothed, accoutred, transported, and seen off by Lord and Lady Harris – their Colonel and his wife. An earlier offer of the Yeomanry for foreign service having been officially refused by the War Office, Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Harris – a man with considerable interests and contacts in South Africa – was able to converse with Colonel Wooll-Sampson, commanding the Imperial Light Horse (ILH), and secure a place for these men. Though Wooll-Sampson could not fulfil the request on account of the ILH being besieged at Ladysmith, the detachment found a home amongst the South African Light Horse. Here, if the popular press is to be believed, they impressed Buller to such an extent that, in his cipher of 16 December 1899, he asked that a further 8,000 irregulars be raised in Britain.<sup>5</sup> This figure was achieved and multiplied from January 1900, but it was not the Home Yeomanry regiments that supplied the bulk.

By 31 March 1901, nearly 30 per cent of the 10,921 Imperial Yeomanry shipped to the Cape had been killed, injured, or imprisoned, though the vast majority

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<sup>3</sup> Badsey, S. 'The Boer War (1899-1902) and British Cavalry Doctrine: A Re-Evaluation' *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 71, No. 1, 2007, pp. 89-90; and Badsey, S. *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry, 1880-1918* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2008), pp. 62-63.

<sup>4</sup> Speech by Lord Harris. *The Morning Chronicle*, 03/01/1900.

<sup>5</sup> Two sergeants and nine troopers. KSYM, KSY/1988/05, 06, 07, & 09.



were invalided through disease.<sup>6</sup> This was a significant number considering that the 'home' force stood at a little over 10,000 efficient members a year earlier. Nonetheless, it was not the Home Yeomanry who took the brunt of these casualties. In fact, the Lucas Committee of 1902 stated that a mere 18.3 per cent of the first contingent of Imperial Yeomanry were serving home yeomen, and a ten per cent sample of all three contingents reveals an even smaller 12.4 per cent enlistment overall. The remaining 81.7 per cent of the first 10,371 were recruited from other voluntary units or amateurs at 'Yeomanry centres' or for Special Corps in Belfast, Dublin, and London.<sup>7</sup>

The Lucas Committee stated that the contribution of the Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa was 10,921 all ranks in March 1901. As shown by the figures for 1898 – a year before 'Black Week' – the number of Yeomanry on British soil was 10,207. Had the home force been mobilised for foreign service it might be supposed that their experience – limited though it was – might have been enough to avoid the disasters of Lindley, Vlaktefontein, Tweebosch, and Tweefontein. Nonetheless, the legal constraints were as complex as the personal constraints that tied proportions of the Yeomanry to home service. This aside, excluding the unfit, the geriatric, and the economically tied, one might still have assumed a greater contribution than the 1,898 NCOs and other ranks that left by this date. As it was, the newly formed Committee of the Imperial Yeomanry had to find the remaining 8,473 men amongst enthusiastic volunteers. Though some were serving or had served in other auxiliary forces, many were civilians.<sup>8</sup>

Regrettably the situation was to become more complex. By May 1901 Imperial Yeomanry numbers in the Cape swelled to over 23,000 with the proliferation of government recruiting for later cohorts and the protracted wait for passage back to Great Britain.<sup>9</sup> However, pressure to return home was mounting and the majority of

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<sup>6</sup> Killed: 18 officers, 198 ORs; died of disease: 8 Offs., 322 ORs; prisoners: 28 Offs., 578 ORs; wounded: 54 Offs., 490 ORs; invalided: 60 Offs., 1,337 ORs. *BPP*: Cd. 803, 1902: Lucas Committee on the Imperial Yeomanry and Proposals for Future Organization, Appendix 56, p.190.

<sup>7</sup> This percentage (of 10,371 men) relates to NCOs and other ranks of the first contingent. No figure exists for officers. The ten % sample was calculated with the attestation documents in the TNA, WO 128 series. This amounts to approximately 4,300 men. *Ibid.* Appendix 36, p.171.

<sup>8</sup> Between 04/01 and 25/05/1900, this committee consisted of Colonel A. G. Lucas, Lieutenant-Colonel E. W. Beckett, Colonel Viscount Valentia, Colonel T. A. St. Quintin, Colonel the Earl of Lonsdale, Captain W. L. Bagot, and Colonel Lord Harris. All were pre-war Yeomanry commandants, bar St. Quintin and Bagot. Colonel H. G. L. Crichton and Sir R. Baillie later replaced Valentia and Bagot when they left for service in South Africa. Lucas Committee, 1902, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> 23,104 in May. *BPP*: Cd. 578, 1901: Return of Military Forces in South Africa in 1899-1901.

the original contingent was demobilised by the summer of 1901. Unfortunately, little attempt was made to transfer the experience and hard lessons learnt during their time at the front. The first contingent was the only one to carry this modest number of pre-war volunteers, and this, combined with the lack of training, highlights the extreme difficulty in demanding effective resistance and a soldierly attitude from later contingents. Put simply, most pre-war yeomen went to South Africa amateurs; the civilian volunteers of the Imperial Yeomanry went wholly ignorant. For a number of reasons the staff faced the logistical nightmare of forming and training 117 squadrons all over South Africa after having sent back all but cadres of the original contingent. With so many command and training issues, it is a wonder they took part at all.<sup>10</sup> Because of this obvious gulf between the 19<sup>th</sup> century institution and the Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa, the latter is considered a separate entity when on operations and this chapter will address this state of affairs and contrast it with those serving in the Home Yeomanry.

It has been shown that the South African War played a significant role in bringing the Yeomanry back into public view in the United Kingdom, swelling the home force to more than double its number. However, this domestic success tells us little about the size and stability of companies raised for South Africa. These numbers would fluctuate more dramatically over this period as there was no fluid movement of men between the UK and the Cape. Instead we find the bulk transportation and wastage of independent contingents; something members of the Yeomanry Committee and those in South Africa spent long hours arguing against to no avail.<sup>11</sup> For example, the 1902 report of the Inspector General of Recruiting shows the first contingent (shipped between 27 January and 14 April 1900) formed under Army Order 1 consisted of 10,242 men; on 1 December that year a return of military forces in South Africa stated that there were only 8,000 in the country.<sup>12</sup> The drafts sourced under A.O. 40, 17 February 1901, formed the second contingent of 16,597 men, intended to fill the gap left by the departing first. Unfortunately, due to the slow pace of demobilisation and the preference shown to the City Imperial Volunteers, by May

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<sup>10</sup> Knight, Major W. C. Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I, 1904, p. 304.

<sup>11</sup> See comments: Colonel Lucas (p. 276 & 279), Major-General Chesham (p. 287), and Major W. C. Knight (p. 304 & 307). Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I, 1904.

<sup>12</sup> *BPP*: Cd. 1417, 1903: Annual Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting, 1902, p. 41; and *BPP*: Cd.421, 1900: Return of Military Forces in South Africa, 1899-1900.

1901 there was a total of 23,104 Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa.<sup>13</sup> This figure, although reduced to 13,650 by January 1902, was bolstered by A.O. 208 of the same year to include those veterans who chose to re-enlist.<sup>14</sup> Whilst the length of enlistment did not change over this year, the rate of pay did. This was a bid to placate the first contingent's complaints over the disparity in pay between colonial and British volunteers, but its effect upon recruiting was not coincidental.<sup>15</sup> The ill-fated second contingent introduced 16,597 green recruits into South Africa and, despite the improved conditions, only 655 re-draftees from 1900.<sup>16</sup> This latter figure amounted to a dismal 6.4 per cent reenlistment rate, which provides further reasons for the poor performance of those rushed out to South Africa in 1901. A.O. 8 of 9 September 1901 would lay down instructions for a final cohort destined for the Cape, amounting to another 7,289 men. Unfortunately, its timing effectively coincided with the end of the war and the majority would not contribute much to the conflict, despite their superior training.<sup>17</sup> In all, this manpower amounted to some 34,733 men serving in South Africa throughout the war under the title of Imperial Yeomanry; some 15,304 more than the contribution of the Volunteer Service Companies.<sup>18</sup> Sadly, to the detriment of the force, poor training and wastage handicapped some from the start, whilst a lack of re-enlistment and want of leadership steepened the learning curve of the rest.

What then is to be made of these figures? Instantly it can be seen that the second contingent more than doubled the number of men in the first and, despite the change of conditions, reenlistment was paltry amongst the initial drafts. As was reiterated to the Elgin Commission, the two most serious errors made by the War Office were the decision to stop and start recruitment, and allowing the first contingent to demobilise after a year's service rather than keeping them for the length of the war (as stated on enlistment). Colonel Lucas, of the Yeomanry Committee, later stated that this lost them the ability to draw on the initial enthusiasm of the public

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<sup>13</sup> Return of Military Forces in South Africa in 1899-1901; and *BPP*: Cd. 1417, 1903: Annual Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting, 1902, p. 41.

<sup>14</sup> *BPP*: Cd. 892, 1902: Return of Military Forces in South Africa, 1899-1902.

<sup>15</sup> *BPP*: Cd. 1789, 1904: Elgin Commission on the War in South Africa, p. 72.

<sup>16</sup> Annual Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting, 1902, p. 41.

<sup>17</sup> Elgin Commission, 1904, p. 75.

<sup>18</sup> Significant numbers of Volunteers joined the IY, pay being a draw – they received 1s a day in the VSCs as opposed to the cavalry rates (1s 8d) and later 5s in the IY. More came with the increase in pay. They brought musketry skills lacking in raw recruits. Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, p. 214.

reaction, allowing the first contingent to 'melt away'.<sup>19</sup> This, combined with a lack of preliminary training for the second contingent, contributed greatly to later difficulties and explains the bulky movement of soldiers. The increase in pay was not only a result of discrepancies between the Imperial Yeomanry and colonials, but directly proportional to the numbers required and the difficulty of finding new recruits at standard rates. This led the Adjutant-General, Sir Thomas Kelly-Kenny, to state that they had, 'had to buy them, and rather dearly, too'.<sup>20</sup> If we consider the small number of pre-war Yeomanry that had volunteered for the initial draft, it is unlikely that circumstances would change to allow them to furnish the later contingents. Although the wider impact of war encouraged the expansion of the Home Yeomanry, this still raises the question of how else the government would have found foreign service volunteers.<sup>21</sup> Kelly-Kenny was not alone in his thoughts on pay, but difficulties in recruiting seem to have gone much further than the act of 'buying' men.<sup>22</sup> When commenting on the raw abilities of the 1901 Yeomanry, Lord Chesham damningly stated that, 'the shooting and riding test, if it was really applied in all cases, must have been one of a very perfunctory character', and went on to estimate that, '75 per cent had never been on a horse before they passed the test in riding at home, and about 25 per cent had ridden very little'.<sup>23</sup> It seems clear that more than one blind eye was turned in an effort to hurriedly raise numbers in a country that had regained its composure after the 'great outburst of patriotism'.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps even worse, these conditions were extended to the recruitment of officers, with commissions granted on previous experience. Given the potential for a further increase in pay on being commissioned, it is unsurprising that the interest came from the same sections of society; unfortunately, their experience was often based on the shaky foundations of a

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<sup>19</sup> The War Office told Lucas that they were recruiting for the South African Constabulary when the IY needed drafts and did not think competing enlistment would benefit either force. Lucas Committee, 1902, Appendix 3, pp. 142-143; see comments by Colonel Lucas, Colonel Deane, Major-General Lord Chesham, and Major Knight. Elgin Commission, 1904, p. 71; and Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I, 1904, p. 276.

<sup>20</sup> Elgin Commission, 1904, p. 72.

<sup>21</sup> Unusually, the Middlesex IY companies (34<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup>) took 30% of the home regiment. At 215 strong in 1899 this amounts to nearly 65 men. Stonham and Freeman, *Historical Records of the Middlesex Yeomanry*, p. 88.

<sup>22</sup> Colonel E. M. S. Crabbe. *BPP*: Cd. 1791, 1904: Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. II, 1904, p. 422.

<sup>23</sup> Elgin Commission, 1904, p. 73.

<sup>24</sup> Ross, P. T. *A Yeoman's Letters* (Burfield & Pennells, 1901), p. 179.

few quiet months on the lines of communication before being invalided through sickness.<sup>25</sup>

Quantitative analysis like this fails to paint a vivid image of the rank and file. There have been numerous attempts to do this using the Imperial Yeomanry attestation forms, but many have failed to address and understand both the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of the force. Perhaps more deceitfully, others have manipulated data to achieve their ends. Price's *An Imperial War and the British Working Class* is well known for its deliberate manipulation of class brackets to show that the lower orders of society were unsupportive of the war.<sup>26</sup> Price states that those men who answered the call after Black Week were drawn from a distinctly non-working-class background. Those working-class men who eventually served in the ranks of the Imperial Yeomanry did so out of financial necessity, drawn in by the increased wage of the second contingent and the unstable domestic labour market; the war itself received little if any support given its assumed exploitation of the working class. As Edward Spiers has since suggested, however, the stimulation of higher wages does not in itself dispense with the possibility of working class patriotism.<sup>27</sup> Price's findings have been shown to be inaccurate by a number of other studies, yet none has offered a final word on this important question.<sup>28</sup>

In another flawed example, Gilks has made the error of bunching all three contingents into one analysis, which confuses matters further. Perhaps unsurprisingly this approach shows that the Yeomanry lowered its social bar and no longer relied upon agricultural trades to fill its ranks; the limitations of this approach are obvious given the change in pay and conditions.<sup>29</sup> Miller utilised a more acceptable method, yet only analysed 525 men from eighteen different companies of the first contingent. In this he revealed a predominance of farmers and horse-related trades, but in another example of imperfect analysis, he neglected to outline what these might be. It is then difficult to observe recruiting trends, as this last example could apply to an urban horse trader or a rural breeder. Despite this, it is still possible to suggest confidently that at least 35 per cent of this analysis were urbanites and, although still dominated

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<sup>25</sup> Unlike the first contingent, officers were not vetted locally by Yeomanry Colonels, but were raised through the recruiting centres. Subalterns earned 15s a day. Major Knight. Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I, 1904, p. 305.

<sup>26</sup> Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class*.

<sup>27</sup> Spiers, *The Scottish Soldier and Empire*, pp. 171 & 183.

<sup>28</sup> See for example: Miller, *Volunteers on the Veld*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>29</sup> Gilks, 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry', pp. 388-396.

by the same class brackets, the base spread much further to include labourers, servants, and the unemployed.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, it is a narrow 5.1 per cent sample of the first contingent and a fairly insignificant 1.5 per cent of the total.

The occupations of the 21st and 22nd Company, Earl of Chester's Yeomanry (first contingent), return similar results to those already given. The highest response is again farmers followed by the agricultural working class, both closely trailed by artisans, town clerks, retailers, and professionals.<sup>31</sup> Once again this is broadly similar to pre-war returns, but the rise in professionals, clerks, the inclusion of labourers and the unemployed is a marked difference. The first two in this shortlist show connections to the larger city, something partly explained by the regiment having to recruit 'a higher proportion of keen young men from the towns than was usual in the regiment at that time'. The regimental history also states that few farmers were able to leave their farms and that many substituted their sons. The strong representation of the agricultural working class is simpler to understand considering their responsibilities were less, but their horsemanship likely to be above average.<sup>32</sup> Despite these two groups, the fact that the companies were oversubscribed suggests that urban recruiting was also rather productive. This premise is still further supported by statistics that show more than half of the rank and file was urbanised and a significant proportion were well-off middle-class professionals. Whilst the appearance of both the agricultural and urban working-class shows that the base of recruiting had broadened significantly, there is no evidence of the great shifts outlined by Gilks and others at this stage. Nonetheless, it remains a limited sample and thus only warrants limited conclusions.

The first contingent is especially significant in light of these analyses. Whilst Gilks has waxed lyrical on the irony that befell Yeomanry recruiting for South Africa – relying on a class officers had previously barred – he has failed to perceive the significance of the division between the home and imperial force and, more importantly, the shifting social intake of the contingents. The occurrence of gentlemen in the rank and file provides us with one example, as does the rise in contribution

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<sup>30</sup> Farmers 25%, horse trades 13%, clerks 8%, engineers 5%, butchers 4%, gentlemen 3%, merchants and traders 3%, metal trades 3%, building trades 2%, grocers 2%, salesmen 2%, labourers 2%, students 2%, land agents 2%, servants 2%, and none 5%. Miller, *Volunteers on the Veld*, p. 68.

<sup>31</sup> Farmers 24%, artisans 15.7%, agricultural w/c 13.2%, clerks 12.4%, retailers 10.7%, professionals 8.3%, independent/gentlemen 5%, merchants 4.1%, unemployed 3.3%, labourers 2.5%, manufacturers 0.8%. Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry*, Appendix III, p. 610.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

from the professional classes and the fact that 34 of the 63 MPs serving in South Africa in 1900 were with the Imperial Yeomanry.<sup>33</sup> However, nothing highlights the failure of this analysis more than the existence of the 'Special Corps'. The Duke of Cambridge's Own, the Sharpshooters, the Rough Riders, Paget's Horse, and the Irish Imperial Yeomanry all rose from nothing and most would serve as independent battalions without a connection to the Yeomanry brigades. However, a circular would bring them under the same conditions as the rest of the force.<sup>34</sup> Paget's Horse was originally raised as an independent corps of gentlemen until drawn under the command of the Imperial Yeomanry Committee. They would eventually furnish four companies for South Africa, recruiting by means of advertisement in gentlemen's clubs with the intention of attracting men of a certain social status encouraged by the sense of emergency and emotion.<sup>35</sup> This encapsulated the deliberate elitism that was pedalled by a minority and *The Times* advertised the few remaining places in the 4<sup>th</sup> Company by asking that all applicants, 'furnish satisfactory references as to their social position'.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, The Duke of Cambridge's Own Company maintained a mandatory £130 enlistment fee alongside the donation of all pay to soldier's widows and orphans; it would seem that if gentlemen were to lower themselves to the rank and file, they would ensure that they were its only occupants.<sup>37</sup> Gentlemen in the rank and file of the Yeomanry were something of a novelty in the 19th century, certainly more so than the Volunteers, and no regiment was ever based on such a principle. As part of the initial wave of Imperial Yeomanry it could then be argued that recruiting had travelled the opposite way along the social spectrum, though this would be just as misleading as laying focus on the shifts of later contingents.

What is required (and is supplied in Chart 5.2) is a detailed and extensive sample analysis of the force as a whole, broken into contingent sections, and treated comparatively. Of particular importance is the use of a more representative method of 'occupational bracketing'. This will avoid errors and deliberate manipulations by viewing men across a spectrum from the working-classes to those of independent means, but most crucially, it will include the middle-classes.

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<sup>33</sup> *BPP*: 158, 1900: Return of Names of Members of Either House of Parliament serving in S. Africa.

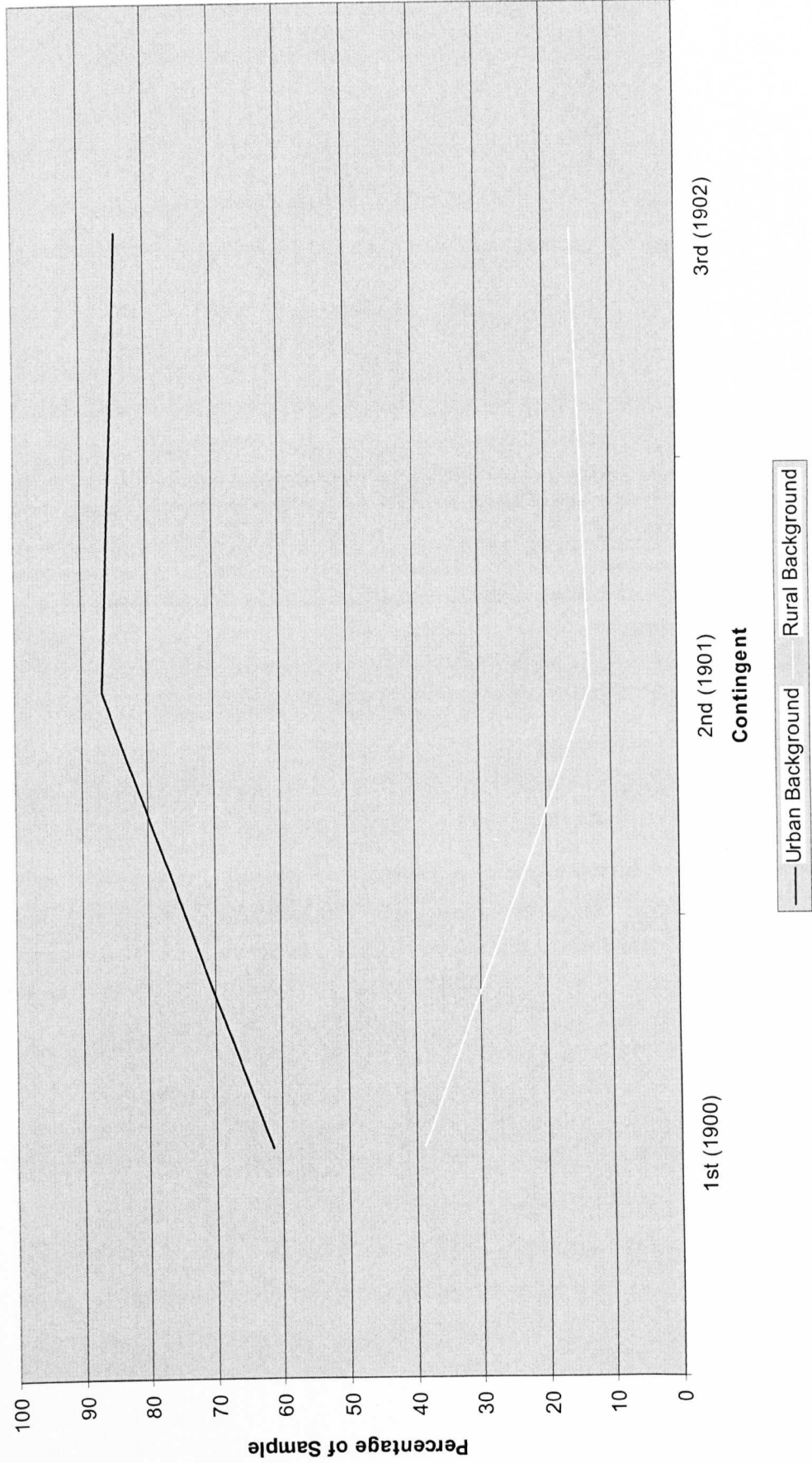
<sup>34</sup> Lucas Committee, 1902, Appendix 30, p. 168.

<sup>35</sup> *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 9/03/1900; and Lucas Committee, 1902, p. 189.

<sup>36</sup> *The Times*, 23/02/1900.

<sup>37</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 19/01/1900.

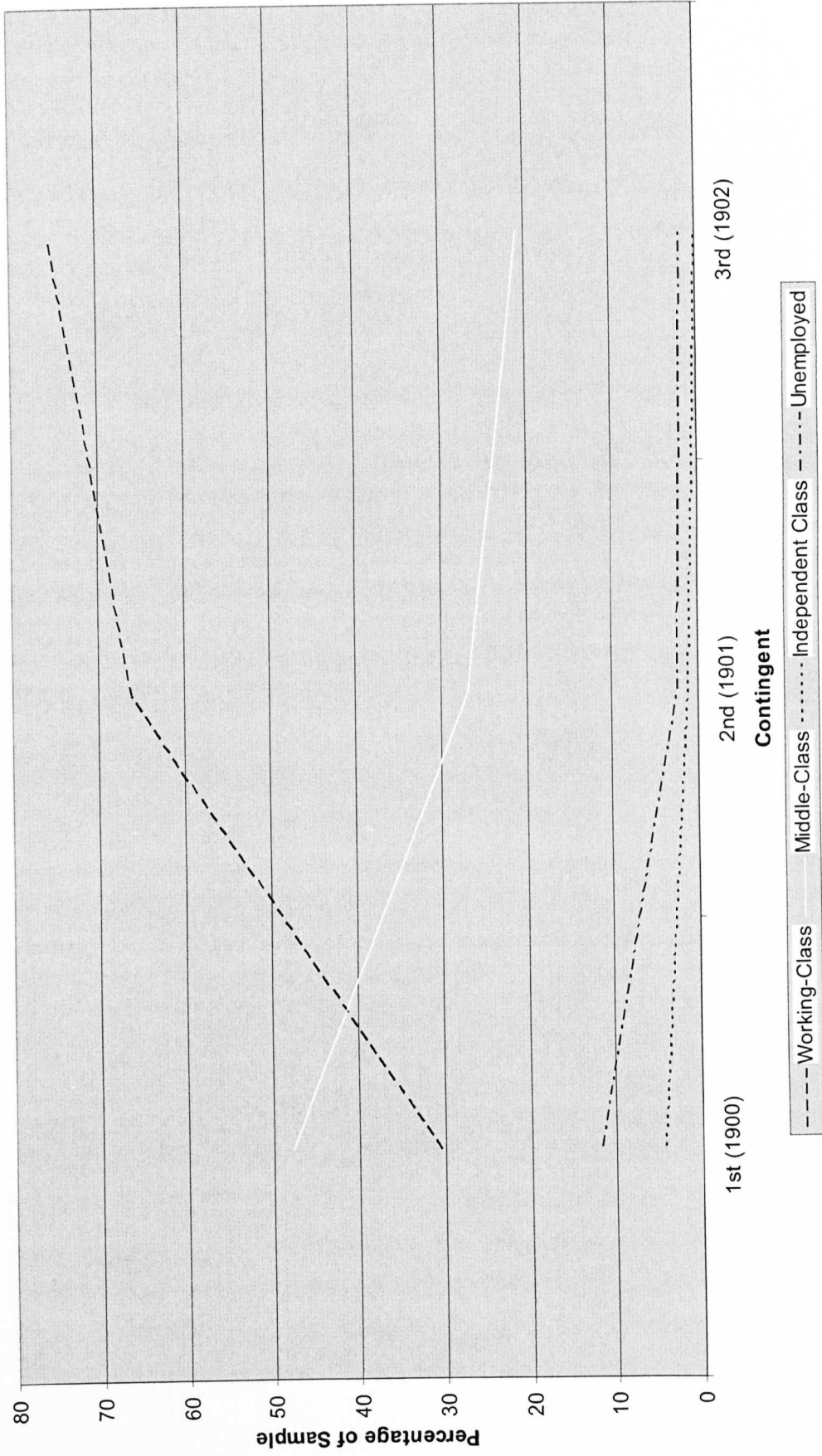
Chart 5.1: The Changing Composition of the Imperial Yeomanry



See Appendix 2 for references.



Chart 5.2: Occupational Trends of the Imperial Yeomanry



See Appendix 2 for references.

One such sample of 2,965 men (or just less than nine per cent of the total) reveals some interesting, if not startling results. Of the first contingent it can be said that the enlistees were predominantly unmarried and that the force was, as Chart 5.1 shows, largely urban, with more than 60 per cent of its manpower taken from such areas.<sup>38</sup> In terms of employment, it can be said that a little over 30 per cent fell within the working-class bracket, and nearly 50 per cent in the middle-class.<sup>39</sup> The second contingent reveals a moderate yet detectable rise in the number of married men, a reduction in the number of agricultural professions to 12.5 per cent, and a fall in middle-class participation by more than 20 per cent. Perhaps most significantly, the presence of the unemployed was appreciably reduced, making up just over two per cent, whilst the return of the working-class elements mushroomed to more than 66 per cent of the total. The final cohort proved to be even more reliant on the working-class – drawing more than 75 per cent from this group – with independent classes showing no returns at all and the middle-class again declining by another six per cent.

Once again this analysis has been reduced to figures. It is clear that the Imperial Yeomanry was never a reflection of the Home Yeomanry, although it certainly did a better job at reflecting society. It can be shown that the contingents of Yeomanry became more reliant on the skilled and unskilled labour market as time went on. However, it is also clear that this bracket was ubiquitous to all three contingents and still made up nearly a third of the initial contingent's manpower, despite pay being at the lower rate. The other dramatic change in participation came from the opposite end of the class spectrum with the loss of the independent classes entirely, as well as more than half of the middle-class: a decline neatly mirrored by the working-class increase. If the Home Yeomanry had existed throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of a class-alliance with a largely rural, middle-class base, the pressures of war forced the Imperial Yeomanry to become a chiefly urbanised, working-class movement. Though some reasons for this division are self-evident, others are less clear and open to contention.

Forming an understanding of enlistment motivations across a whole force is exceedingly difficult. The gulf between the first and second contingent in South Africa was initially argued by Price as a combination of an increasingly hostile labour

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<sup>38</sup> The percentage of married men rose from 11.7 to 13.5 and then 15.2 over the contingents. See Appendix 2 for references and bracketing information. These details rely on attestation forms and are not infallible, but they are the most accurate and numerous source available.

<sup>39</sup> Although 'class' is a crude measure, it simplifies the comparisons and fits with the existing literature.

market and a rise in rates of pay. However, the results above, and more recent work, have highlighted the importance of 'popular imperialism' brought on through education and entertainment, and downplayed the hostility of the economy.<sup>40</sup> The popularity of the war in its own right has been much debated, particularly within this class paradigm, but on the whole it is misguided to state that early disasters did not capture the attention of the general public. As a result it is easy to unearth claims by the patriotic and literate, such as Corporal P. T. Ross of the 69<sup>th</sup> (Sussex) Company Imperial Yeomanry, who saw those events as defining moments in their own lives and for the country and empire they had grown to believe in.<sup>41</sup> Further evidence is found in the enthusiastic crowds that turned out as companies of Yeomanry left and returned from the front, as well as the positive press coverage these events received. The *Kent Messenger* produced one example when they published the *Illustrated Yeomanry Souvenir* for the return of their first contingent in July 1901. Although the author claimed that, 'in cooler weather we have heard louder cheers and seen more exhilarating demonstrations', he went on to state that, 'the Yeomen...had no reason to complain', as they were later treated to a banquet at the corn exchange in Maidstone.<sup>42</sup>

It seems that initial contingents across the country experienced similar proceedings, although it is harder to account for comparable scenes as the later contingents were dispatched and returned. Nonetheless, in recent years it has been made abundantly clear that we should not downplay the roles of idealism, popular imperialism, obvious incentives, and the voluntary nature of enlistment when the social composition of the force in question leads us to assume that we should. Spiers, for example, has suggested that many of the jobless actually preferred the state of unemployment to enlistment in the regular army, and it is unlikely that the slightly increased pay of later Imperial Yeomanry contingents would have changed this sentiment.<sup>43</sup> Some contemporaries were quick to do this, however, with one stating that later contingents of colonials were never driven or recruited by the ideals of previous volunteers and that:

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<sup>40</sup> Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class*; and Spiers, E. *The Army and Society*, p. 44.

<sup>41</sup> Reason 34 of 'why I joined the Yeomanry' – 'Had always preached Patriotism and thought it was the time to put theory into practice.' Ross, *A Yeoman's Letters*, p. 179.

<sup>42</sup> CKS, U24/218. *Kent Messenger*, 24/07/1901.

<sup>43</sup> Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815-1914*, p. 44.

Jail-bird, pickpocket, thief, drunkard, and loafer...presented themselves to the recruiting-sergeant, and in due course polluted the uniform which they were not fit to salute from a distance...new corps were raised, with spirit-stirring titles, while old, honoured, and existing regiments were sullied beyond recognition by association with the refuse and sweepings from the least manly community in the universe.<sup>44</sup>

It is clear that these sentiments were shared by many for those who joined the Imperial Yeomanry after the initial wave. Others, like veteran yeomen M. F. Gage, went as far as to say that those raised later in Britain, 'were wrongly termed "Imperial Yeomanry"...[as they had] come forward from the slums of our great cities, attracted by that most injudicious bribe of 35s a week.'<sup>45</sup> This is not only unfair, but at least in part incorrect. As John Springhall suggested, the rise of 'muscular Christianity' and militarism in youth movements, and contemporary literature, had been taking place since the 1880s and had primed 'unruly boys' of a multitude of class backgrounds for military service in the future.<sup>46</sup> Wider society had also been militarised by a combination of the existing volunteer movements, and the invasion scares of the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and further imbued with nationalism by the music hall, both of which made the response to war all the more vocal.<sup>47</sup> Although late Victorian society had introduced more Britons to the concept of leisure, for the most part people's lives remained dictated by routine and, given the analysis of class and occupational backgrounds, it would seem that the short enlistment of the Imperial Yeomanry was attractive to a broad cross-section of society.<sup>48</sup> Despite the fact that many first contingent yeomen thought their regiments were tarnished by the presence of the lower orders of society cashing in on the augmented pay, these arguments fail to

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<sup>44</sup> 'The Intelligence Officer' *On the Heels of De Wet* (Blackwood, London, 1902), p. 42.

<sup>45</sup> Gage, Captain M. F. *Records of the Dorset Imperial Yeomanry, 1894-1905* (Bennett, 1906), pp. 144-145.

<sup>46</sup> Springhall, J. *Youth, Empire, and Society: British Youth Movements 1883-1940* (Archon, 1977), pp. 17-18.

<sup>47</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, pp. 198-200; and Summerfield, P. 'Patriotism and Empire: Music-Hall Entertainment, 1870-1914' in MacKenzie, J. M. (ed.) *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (MUP, 1986).

<sup>48</sup> The underlying cultural pressures have been assessed by Miller in greater detail: Miller, S. 'In Support of the "Imperial Mission"? Volunteering for the South African War, 1899-1902.' *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 69, No. 3, 2005, pp. 691-711.

address the potential 3,000 working class men of the first contingent who were clearly motivated by other factors.<sup>49</sup>

There is little doubt that these underlying influences made a significant impact on many potential recruits – as did scant understanding of the conditions at the front – but it is hard to apply this on its own to the whole. Countering the negative aspects of imperial service – for those cautious because of dependants, for example – there was special dispensation offered by a number of regiments in the form of life insurance policies upon enlistment, whilst officers from other regiments could make the most of private schemes.<sup>50</sup> The Lucas Committee also reported that the nearest kin of serving yeomen, if severely stretched, could apply for aid from relief funds provided by the *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, lords lieutenant of counties, and the Patriotic Fund to help alleviate their hardship.<sup>51</sup> In a similar sense, there were even financial inducements for the wealthy, with members of the British Empire Club being exempt from subscriptions if they were serving with auxiliary or colonial corps in South Africa.<sup>52</sup>

There were, however, more lucrative benefits that went beyond pay and dutiful service to the empire. If a trooper was accepted into the South African Constabulary or other local police force whilst on service, their discharge was permitted to be free and immediate.<sup>53</sup> Preparations for this transfer had been drawn up after consulting Major-General Baden-Powell, who predicted the need for some 10,000 police in the Transvaal alone. Conditions of service offered men the opportunity to find a desirable place to settle, attractive rates of pay, and arrangements for transporting wives and children to join them later. Although in May 1901 much of this remained in embryo, this right was in some cases exercised to the full with a whole company transferring *en bloc* in Johannesburg because of the attractions of the district.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Calculated using the sample results and the total for the first contingent. 30% of 10,242 equates to 3,073.

<sup>50</sup> For example the Sharpshooters and the Dorset Yeomanry. *The Times*, 17/01/1900; Glyn, Major R. H. *A Short Account of the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry, 1794-1939*, (Dorset Press, Dorchester, C. 1947); A Captain MacFarlane of 71 Piccadilly W. was offering one such private scheme to Yeomanry officers in *The County Gentleman*, 06/01/1900.

<sup>51</sup> Lucas Committee, 1902, pp. 70-71.

<sup>52</sup> *The County Gentleman*, 28/04/1900.

<sup>53</sup> Annual Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting, 1902, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> Rates of pay: other ranks: 5 to 10s per diem; NCOs: 12s 6d; officers: 20 to 25s. Lucas Committee, 1902, pp. 107-108.

Outside of these police forces, yeomen were also considered candidates for gifts of land and were given the option of taking their discharge within South Africa.<sup>55</sup> McFarland states that 14 per cent of the Scottish Yeomanry settled in the country over the course of the war, and despite incorrectly estimating a 5.3 per cent national average, the 7.6 per cent reality remains significant in this analysis.<sup>56</sup> Although *Country Life* admitted that the 'imperial and imperious' yeoman who was rumoured to have taken his plough to South Africa was most likely invented, they did emphasise the 'opening' that would take place at the war's end.<sup>57</sup> The Lucas Committee also called attention to this point and, given the quality of Cape horses during the conflict, stressed the possibility of curing Britain's remount problem *and* the settler issue with a colonial horse breeding programme.<sup>58</sup>

For some, the Imperial Yeomanry presented an enormous opportunity which may not have been achievable in normal life: free emigration and settlement incentives. This played into the hands of those seeking escapism and adventure as well as those burdened by debts or troublesome relationships, and from the government's point of view, populating the country with loyal volunteers meant planting the seeds of stability for the future. Indeed, securing a strong white British colony incorporating the gold fields had been a driving factor behind Milner's propagation of the conflict.<sup>59</sup> As the Lucas Committee concluded, 'if [the Imperial Yeomanry's] powerful organisation and committee were to...use their influence towards the collection of funds which would enable the men to settle...[they could bring] pacification and prosperity to South Africa'.<sup>60</sup> These considerations were clearly carefully tailored to offer an attractive package and, furthermore, it would seem that these opportunities were not only appreciated by the agricultural community. Although an understanding of the land and soils of South Africa was not common knowledge, there may well have been the possibility of social climbing within a number of occupations amongst those restricted by late-Victorian society.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 105.

<sup>56</sup> Scottish yeomen made up 673 men. Other figure calculated from the 2,638 of 34,733 that settled. McFarland, "Empire-Enlarging Genius", pp. 318-319. For corrected figure see: Annual Report of the Inspector-General for 1902, p. 24.

<sup>57</sup> *Country Life Illustrated*, 17/03/1900.

<sup>58</sup> Lucas Committee, 1902, pp. 106-107.

<sup>59</sup> Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>60</sup> Lucas Committee, 1902, p. 108.

For others, the opportunity to earn 10s a day on the government run farm would surely have been enough.<sup>61</sup>

What might be called motivations clearly varied a great deal. The seemingly disappointing response from pre-war yeomen was seen by Bennett as a lack of commitment to a foreign war, something that made them of little value to the British military.<sup>62</sup> This unsympathetic indictment does not take into account a number of obvious restrictions held over them; namely their occupations, their social position, and perhaps most importantly, the fact that statutes did not ask them to commit blindly to service overseas. The predominantly middle-class membership typically worked hard and employed labour, and in the case of farmers, this work was at times intense. The sacrifice required was simply unfeasible to many. Others, such as Lord Harris, were keen to maintain efficiency in the Home Yeomanry and believed a deficit could easily be made up with volunteers without compromising the efficiency of the imperial service company.<sup>63</sup> The Yeomanry was not going to offer itself *en masse* for a colonial conflict and so flexibility was required in recruitment. As the Elgin Commission concluded:

firstly...in a time of national emergency and emotion, a picked force of the best fighting material can be obtained; and, secondly...when the crisis has passed away and the emotion has declined, it is possible, especially if trade is bad and there is a chance of doing better in a new country, to obtain for 5s. a day a class of recruit, looked at as raw material, of better average quality than that obtained at the ordinary rate of pay in the Army.<sup>64</sup>

Regardless of social class or background, volunteers for the Imperial Yeomanry were motivated by factors so diverse as to question the validity of any attempt at summary. The commission's conclusion to this point shows greater understanding than it might at first seem, however: the '5s. class' were a better category of man than the

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<sup>61</sup> McFarland, "Empire-Enlarging Genius", p. 321.

<sup>62</sup> Bennett, W. *Absent-Minded Beggars – Yeomanry and Volunteers in the Boer War* (Leo Cooper, Barnsley, 1999), p. 12.

<sup>63</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Lord Harris (East Kent Yeomanry) feared the Yeomanry might be asked to revert to constabulary work whilst men were away. He pushed the government to allow the Home Yeomanry to recruit back to establishment and recoup the deficit caused by foreign service. *The Morning Chronicle*, 03/01/1900.

<sup>64</sup> Elgin Commission, 1904, p. 74.

archetypal army recruit and would not, under normal circumstances, have considered adopting the army as a profession. Competition from the civilian jobs market meant that extra incentives would be needed to bring them forward. Ignoring what was and what might have been made of these volunteers, in terms of sheer numbers it is clear that this experiment paid off in South Africa.

Casting judgement on the Imperial Yeomanry's battlefield performance is ostensibly as difficult as identifying recruiting trends, given that the most detailed coverage surrounds the most negative aspects of the war. The gamut of general opinion, however, runs from predictably mediocre to woefully inept. Price identified its unpopularity amongst the regular forces whilst Miller quoted the criticisms of the then Majors Allenby and Birdwood. The inclusion of the latter examples suggests this ill-feeling transcended post-war criticism and entered reflective historical accounts.<sup>65</sup> Whilst there is no denying that the force suffered casualties incomparable to other auxiliaries, it would be unfair to suggest that this was due to continuous failure. It was, nonetheless, a confused contribution; one that saw few battalions come together, whilst those that did were subsequently broken up. The demand for mounted men was so great that there was no adherence to the original planning. Instead of encircling the Boer republics with Imperial Yeomanry, they were doled out to practically every command in the theatre.<sup>66</sup> This was not well received by their would be commander, Major-General John Brabazon, who reflected that he had been stripped of his authority and made an easily ignored, unofficial member of Lord Roberts's staff.<sup>67</sup> Given that Roberts's had recently sacked him from his command of one of French's cavalry brigades on grounds of age, this can only have added to his suffering.<sup>68</sup>

The apparent lack of trust shown to the Imperial Yeomanry was not shown to all the volunteers. As with all the auxiliaries, most of the City Imperial Volunteers and Volunteer Service Companies reached South Africa after the defeat of the Boer field army. Nonetheless, whilst the Yeomanry remained lodged in its Maitland camp waiting for transport, the Mounted Infantry elements of the CIV were sent to the Kimberley area in a matter of ten days and saw action on 15 February when the siege was lifted. They subsequently joined Roberts's advance into the Orange Free State

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<sup>65</sup> Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class*, p. 196; and Miller, S. M. *Volunteers on the Veld*, p. 156.

<sup>66</sup> Bennett, *Absent-Minded Beggars*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>67</sup> Elgin Commission, *Minutes of Evidence*, Vol. I, 1904, pp. 293-294.

<sup>68</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p. 100.



and were joined by the CIV infantry in March. The CIV found a powerful ally in the Commander-in-Chief, something that expedited their early passage home and the favourable interpretation of their service. Despite this, however, it is clear that once trained and experienced, these socially superior soldiers deserved much praise. The service companies of Volunteers also largely earned the trust and respect of their professional peers, though their experience was hardly as glamorous as that of the CIV. Unlike the early operations of the CIV, many companies took months to be attached to their regular regiments, time that they spent guarding lines of communication. Though some found their way to the front integrated into their parent regular battalions, many continued monotonous guard duties or were utilised in the blockhouse line. Despite an impressive 59 battalions of Militia making their way to South Africa, these troops remained on the lines of communication throughout the war.<sup>69</sup>

With these contextual experiences in mind, it is worth noting that the Imperial Yeomanry's opening contact with the enemy at Boshof on 5 April 1900 was a success. A force of approximately 100 European volunteers and a small number of Boers – led by an aged yet experienced French officer – underestimated the Yeomanry's strength, was surrounded, and subsequently beaten.<sup>70</sup> Another less conclusive action took place at Nooitgedacht on 13 December 1900, when the 20<sup>th</sup> (Fife & Forfar), 26<sup>th</sup> (Dorset) and 27<sup>th</sup> (Devon) Companies formed part of the defence of Major-General Clements's camp when attacked by a vastly superior Boer force under the command of Jan Smuts, Koos de la Rey, and Christiaan Beyers.<sup>71</sup> Whilst Clements was heavily criticised for his choice of campsite, the response of the yeoman was impressive. The Imperial Yeomanry initially lost the high ground to the Boers, but under Clements's leadership they covered the withdrawal from the camp and extricated themselves in the process.<sup>72</sup> Part of the credit for this action should arguably fall to Clements, although the Yeomanry, despite suffering casualties, proved themselves capable of operating alongside regular soldiers in a complex combined operation.

Unfortunately for the reputation of the first contingent, and perhaps the whole force, one event became synonymous with the Yeomanry: the disaster at Lindley

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<sup>69</sup> Bennett, *Absent-Minded Beggars*, pp. 44-46, 51, 77, 96-97, & 190; and Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, pp. 201-204.

<sup>70</sup> TNA, WO 108/380. Secret Dispatches – Vol. I, p. 281; and Bennett, *Absent-Minded Beggars*, p. 101-104.

<sup>71</sup> Bennett, *Absent-Minded Beggars*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>72</sup> Gage, *Records of the Dorset Imperial Yeomanry*, pp. 125-132.

between 27 and 31 May 1900. Basil Reckitt published his father's diary of the incident which describes how a small number of Boers were captured and disarmed near Lindley, later to be released by Colonel Spragge on good faith. Spragge was in command of the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion Imperial Yeomanry, a predominantly Irish force, and had been intending to rendezvous with General Colville between Lindley and Heilbron. Unfortunately, the released Boers proceeded ahead of the force and alerted the enemy of the advancing Yeomanry. These Boers – as so often in the conflict – had occupied Lindley after the departure of Colville's forces and now waited in ambush for Spragge.<sup>73</sup> Despite retreating to the kopjes outside Lindley, the Yeomanry were surrounded by 2,500 Boers under Piet De Wet, who besieged the position for four days.<sup>74</sup> Dispatches were sent to Colville and Methuen, but whilst Colville chose not to act, Methuen's detachment proved too slow and too small to break through to the besieged force.<sup>75</sup> The position became untenable once the Colt gun jammed and Boer artillery arrived and, following a last stand by Lord Longford and the 45<sup>th</sup> (Dublin) Company, the white flag was raised in controversial circumstances by a corporal of the Duke of Cambridge's Own.<sup>76</sup> The Imperial Yeomanry eventually lost 80 killed, including Sir John Power (the whiskey baronet), in addition to 530 captured, including Spragge, James Craig (the future Prime Minister of Northern Ireland) and Lords Longford, Ennismore, Leitrim, and Donoughmore. Boer losses amounted to 70 killed.<sup>77</sup> To add insult to injury, their captors slipped the net of 20,000 British soldiers attempting a rescue.<sup>78</sup>

The men of the Imperial Yeomanry were not given a chance to prove their mettle as command decisions had committed them to an unwinnable fight. Furthermore, James Craig claimed in his diary that none of the Irish companies had intended to surrender and that none of their officers had been consulted on the decision.<sup>79</sup> It would seem that the Yeomanry had fought no worse than British regulars in similar situations. Although *The Northern Whig* focussed on the valiant

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<sup>73</sup> Reckitt, B. N. *The Lindley Affair – A Diary of the Boer War* (A. Brown & Sons, 1972), pp. 14-16.

<sup>74</sup> Bennett, *Absent-Minded Beggars*, p. 116.

<sup>75</sup> Peel, Hon. Sir S. C. *Trooper 8008, IY* (Edward Arnold, London, 1901), pp. 79-83.

<sup>76</sup> The controversy arose over his authority to offer surrender. Reckitt, *The Lindley Affair*, pp. 17-28; Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry, Vol. IV*, p. 180; Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp. 436-437; and Bennett, *Absent-Minded Beggars*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>77</sup> IY figures from Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 437; Boer figures from Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry, Vol. IV*, p. 181.

<sup>78</sup> Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 437.

<sup>79</sup> PRONI, D1415/B/2. Lieutenant James Craig's Rough Diary, 28/05/1900.

struggle and resisted apportioning blame, others initially looked to Colville as he had failed to assist the yeomen.<sup>80</sup> However, Colville argued that military operations should not, 'be influenced by questions of social positions...millionaires though some of them might be', and was later cleared by the Royal Commission.<sup>81</sup> Pakenham, Amery, and others have subsequently criticised Spragge for not retreating, something he had admitted was perfectly possible and was undeniably the root cause of the disaster.<sup>82</sup> Rayne Kruger alleged that Piet De Wet had inflicted more casualties on the British at Lindley than the Boer forces had suffered in Roberts's advance on Johannesburg in the same week, and it would seem that leadership played a large part in this.<sup>83</sup> Given that the material of the rank and file remained superior to that of the regular army, and that they had received a modest yet useful three months training, it seems the galvanising influence of experienced leadership could have helped them avoid such an awkward scenario; unfortunately, a regular officer, Spragge, had failed the Irish Yeomanry more than they had him.<sup>84</sup>

For the most part the second contingent did not experience the early success of the first. Their first major action was at Vlakfontein on 29 May 1901 where the Scottish Horse, 27<sup>th</sup> (Devon), 48<sup>th</sup> (North Devon) and 69<sup>th</sup> (Sussex) Companies Imperial Yeomanry formed part of Brigadier-General Dixon's rearguard, along with an infantry company of the Derbyshire Regiment and two guns of the 28<sup>th</sup> Battery, RFA.<sup>85</sup> On the column's return to camp a significant force of 1,500 Boers under General Kemp set light to the grass and advanced behind the smokescreen, 'snapping up' a portion of Dixon's rearguard, including his guns.<sup>86</sup> In the mêlée that followed a significant proportion of the Imperial Yeomanry fell back on the infantry causing confusion and casualties in the process.<sup>87</sup> Dixon ordered a counterattack to reclaim the guns, and the Scottish Horse and Derbyshire Regiment successfully drove the enemy

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<sup>80</sup> *The Northern Whig*, 05-08/06/1900; and Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 436.

<sup>81</sup> *The Times*, 31/12/1900.

<sup>82</sup> Bennett, *Absent-Minded Beggars*, pp. 121-122; Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 437; and Amery, L. C. M. S. (gen. ed.) and B. Williams (ed.), *The Times History of the War in South Africa, 1899-1902, Vol. IV* (William Clowes and Sons, 1906), pp. 258-259.

<sup>83</sup> Kruger, R. *Good-bye Dolly Gray* (Cassell, London, 1959), p. 312.

<sup>84</sup> Elgin Commission, 1904, pp. 71-72.

<sup>85</sup> *BPP*: Cd. 693, 1901: Report from Brigadier-General Dixon on the Operations at Vlackfontein, 29/05/1901, p. 2 & 4.

<sup>86</sup> Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 514.

<sup>87</sup> Report from Brigadier-General Dixon on the Operations at Vlakfontein, 29/05/1901, p. 3.

off, but at considerable loss to the latter.<sup>88</sup> To McFarland, this event, ‘salvaged the Imperial Yeomanry’s reputation’, but even if the Scottish Horse’s contribution was as noteworthy as she suggests – which casualty figures imply it was not – this can only be said for a proportion of the force.<sup>89</sup> Although not a victory for either side – the Boers left with 41 killed and an unknown number of wounded, whilst British casualties were 59 killed and 137 wounded or missing – the Imperial Yeomanry companies alone suffered more than 30 per cent casualties, despite not being involved in the counterattack.<sup>90</sup> The event led Lord Kitchener to state: ‘I am afraid some of the new Yeomanry were somewhat wild’; a criticism that somewhat overlooked the fact that this was the first major action of the second contingent, but it was otherwise perceptive.<sup>91</sup> Vlakfontein was the first occasion on which the Imperial Yeomanry fled when confronted by a Boer assault; it was not to be the last.

Boer attacks on British camps became a recurring theme as the war drew on, often proving costly for the Yeomanry. At Moedwil on 30 September 1901 and Tweefontein on Christmas Day 1901, the Yeomanry suffered devastating assaults by significant enemy forces, something that further highlighted their inexperience in routine camp defence.<sup>92</sup> Attacks on convoys also became something of a regularity, and yet another contentious issue for the second contingent of Yeomanry. Despite some success at Rooikopjes – when the Irish Yeomanry held their own in what Conan Doyle described as one of the finest deeds of arms of the war – the force was roundly humiliated at Ysterspruit. Here Boers broke up and captured parts of a convoy, an incident only worsened by the Yeomanry’s rout when defending Methuen’s column at Tweebosch – considered one of the biggest embarrassments of the war.<sup>93</sup> What was identified as a perennial issue with officership raised its head in the aftermath of these late disasters. Forming the basis of Methuen’s deconstruction of the collapse, he

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<sup>88</sup> Two hundred Scottish Horse suffered nine casualties. The quantity of 1<sup>st</sup>. Derbyshire Regiment is unknown, but it was likely to have been a company (approx. 100 men); they suffered 87 casualties. *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>89</sup> As footnote 88 suggests, the brunt of the fighting was taken by the Derbyshire Regiment. McFarland, “Empire Enlarging Genius”, p. 326; and *The Times* 06/06/1901 and 12/07/1901.

<sup>90</sup> Figures vary – Pakenham states 49 men killed, sourced from the official history. The above figure comes from Report from Brigadier-General Dixon on the Operations at Vlakfontein, 29/05/1901, p. 4.

<sup>91</sup> Bennett, *Absent-Minded Beggars*, p. 192.

<sup>92</sup> At Moedwil (also known as Rustenberg) 1,500 Boers under de la Rey inflicted 107 casualties on the IY and left them horseless at the cost of 60 men. At Tweefontein Christiaan De Wet and around 1,000 Boers gutted a Yeomanry camp leaving 289 dead, suffering only 14 casualties. Bennett, *Absent-Minded Beggars*, p. 196.

<sup>93</sup> Conan Doyle, A. *The Great Boer War* (Smith, Elder & Co, London, 1902), pp. 265, 274 & 304; *The Times* 04/03/1902; and *BPP*: Cd. 967, 1902: Lieutenant-General Lord Methuen’s report on the Action at Tweebosch, 07/03/1902, p. 4.

stated that, 'the 86<sup>th</sup> [Rough Riders] Company Imperial Yeomanry [were] very much out of hand, lacking both fire-discipline and knowledge of how to act. There seemed to be a want of instructed officers and non-commissioned officers'.<sup>94</sup> The enemy clearly understood this weakness and galloped the flank screen of 5<sup>th</sup> (mostly Northumberland) Battalion Imperial Yeomanry until they broke and left a section of artillery to the mercy of the Boers; the rest of the column followed suit and were forced to surrender.<sup>95</sup>

The late arrival of much of the third contingent meant they were not given much opportunity to contribute to the conflict. That said, both the 25<sup>th</sup> (Sharpshooters) and 26<sup>th</sup> (Younghusband's Horse) Battalions (described as veteran Yeomanry) were involved in the drives and controversial farm clearing that characterised the counterinsurgency operations in the Free State in the last year of the war.<sup>96</sup> Two companies would also serve alongside the 5<sup>th</sup> Lancers, fighting an indecisive skirmish at Kraaifontein on 21 April 1902, and a more sustained, yet equally unresolved attack at Steinkopf on 28 April.<sup>97</sup> Taking into account the increasing British control of South Africa, it is hard to judge these men by their limited exploits. However, it should be noted that they had been held for three months within specially formed camps of instruction at Aldershot or the Scottish and Irish depots to allow for more thorough training. Perhaps more importantly, as the Elgin Commission stated, it also provided, 'an opportunity for eliminating useless officers and men'.<sup>98</sup> Further to this, a number of regular officers were allowed for the contingent and, despite the supposed embargo on recruiting Indian Army officers, a number were procured.<sup>99</sup> Potentially this stood to be the finest contingent to see service, having learnt from the errors of poor officership and training. Unfortunately this state of readiness took three attempts and the finished article practically coincided with the end of the war.

Given their inherent mobility, the Yeomanry was largely spared lines of communication and blockhouse duties and instead spent time patrolling and escorting

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<sup>94</sup> Lieutenant-General Lord Methuen's report on the Action at Tweebosch, 07/03/1902, p. 4.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>96</sup> Peacock, E. J. 'The Veteran Yeomanry in South Africa, 1901-1902,' *Soldiers of the Queen*. No. 90, 1997, p. 23; and McKenzie Rew, Captain H. G. *Records of the Rough Riders (XX<sup>th</sup> Battalion Imperial Yeomanry) – Boer War 1899-1902* (Brown & Wilson, Bedford, 1907), p. 44.

<sup>97</sup> Peacock, E. J. 'The Veteran Yeomanry in South Africa', p. 24.

<sup>98</sup> Elgin Commission, 1904, p. 75.

<sup>99</sup> In spite of these regulars, Major Knight thought most officers were of a similar stamp to the second contingent. The majority, however, would never see service. Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I, 1904, p. 306; Elgin Commission, 1904, p. 75; and Peacock, 'The Veteran Yeomanry in South Africa', p. 24.

convoys. With such a variety of tasks it is clear that expectations were high, yet due to the confused way in which the force was raised, training remained a controversial issue from the beginning. The first contingent had been drilled by local regiments and their staff for two or three months prior to embarkation. However, the majority of regimental officers had spent their careers as light cavalry soldiers, not Mounted Rifles, and the limitations of this training is highlighted in a number of contemporary accounts.<sup>100</sup> Despite these limitations, leadership was provided by a large number of Yeomanry officers or men recommended by commanding officers, although it was noted that many sought passage home before their men. The least effective second contingent was then sent out to South Africa with no training at all at Kitchener's request, which led Colonel Lucas to state that the Yeomanry Committee had been effectively made recruiting agents in all but name.<sup>101</sup> Some of these 1901 companies proved to be more effective than others, but for the most part this was reliant on personal initiative and self-interest. Lieutenant-Colonel Weston-Jarvis, for example, oversaw the raising of two Sharpshooters battalions that he later commanded. As a result he had the benefit of selecting officers and working to more rigorous shooting and riding standards with the rank and file. The result of this was that 2,557 of 3,762 potential recruits were rejected, predominantly due to ill-health.<sup>102</sup> Unfortunately not all regiments were as stringent and Weston-Jarvis went on to say that he suspected most of those he rejected made their way into the Duke of Cambridge's Own. As a result, he thought they 'brought a certain amount of discredit to the 1901 contingent', and probably made up part of the 700 men sent home from South Africa as unsuitable.<sup>103</sup>

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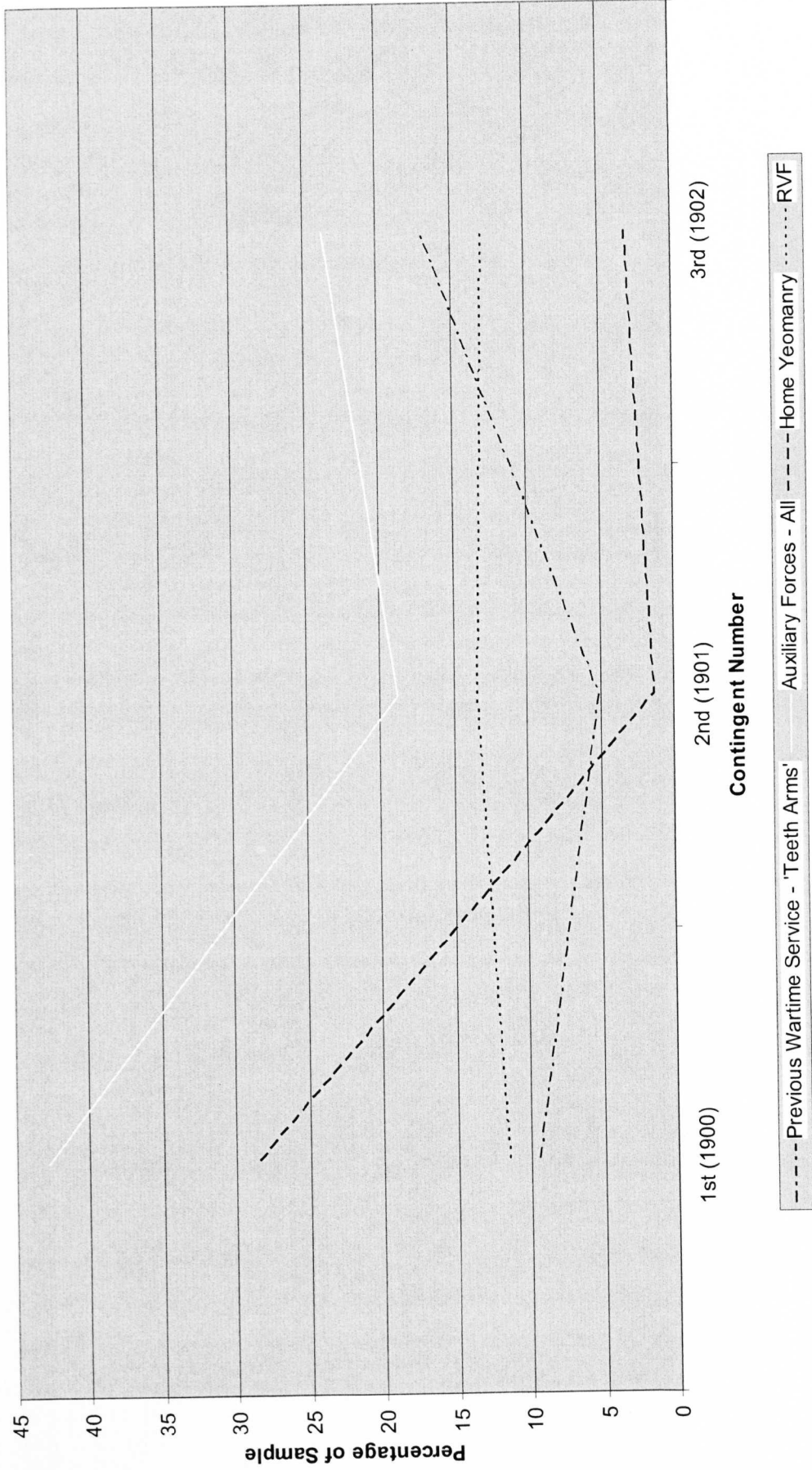
<sup>100</sup> Corner, W. *The Story of the 34<sup>th</sup> Company (Middlesex) Imperial Yeomanry from the Point of View of Private No. 6243* (Fisher Unwin, 1902), p. 18; Hunter, H. *Twelve Months with the Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa* (The Whitehaven News Ltd, 1901), p. 46; Peel, *Trooper 8008*, p. 6; and Elgin Commission, *Minutes of Evidence*, Vol. I, 1904, p. 276.

<sup>101</sup> Elgin Commission, *Minutes of Evidence*, Vol. I, 1904, pp. 274, 277 & 305.

<sup>102</sup> Weston-Jarvis fought hard to ship his men together – most yeomen embarked in mixed groups of 110 soon after arriving at Aldershot. They reorganised in South Africa and were sent to their companies where possible. Major Knight envisaged a rotation that would replace the original contingent with the new as they became efficient, but time made this impossible. *Ibid*, pp. 304-305 & 309.

<sup>103</sup> The same regiment that previously demanded a subscription fee and the donation of all pay. These figures are a conservative estimate. *Ibid*, pp. 277, 278, 288, 305, & 309.

Chart 5.3: Previous Military Experience in the Imperial Yeomanry



See Appendix 2 for references.

In truth, many 'unfit' soldiers were accepted under the Secretary of State's directive that men need not reach the standards for a full term of service, but should be, 'free from organic disease or other defect likely to prevent [them] from doing [their] work during the duration of the present war'. Ominously, as their inspector general observed, many did not appear to have received even this level of examination.<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, ignoring Weston-Jarvis's apparent diligence, his 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Battalions still only received two regimental drills before going into the line acting in advance of a column.<sup>105</sup> In his own words, 'the whole success...was entirely a question of officers...[the other ranks] only wanted to be told what to do and how to do it; but if you had not the officers to tell them it was perfectly hopeless'.<sup>106</sup> The third contingent saw far greater coordination under central supervision and the success this had has been outlined above; this assiduousness was a year too late, however.

Performance contrasted with previous military experience shows clearly how familiarity with military behaviour could alter outcomes enormously. As the successful elements of the second contingent would show, above all else, efficiency amongst officers could make up for enormous shortfalls in the rank and file. Nonetheless, Chart 5.3 provides this useful information in respect to other ranks, which in its own right shows interesting trends. Those men deemed to have performed badly in South Africa – the majority of the second contingent – exhibit the lowest proportion of previous military experience, with all but the contribution of the Rifle Volunteers plummeting compared to the first. Contrary to this, those considered most effective – or potentially most effective – in the third contingent returned more than three times the number of ex-regular servicemen and also showed recovery in the contribution from the auxiliary forces. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the more effective contingents contained higher proportions of experienced servicemen in both the officer corps and rank and file and, in particular, the return of ex-regular servicemen proves a good measure of this efficiency.

It would, nonetheless, be unjust to victimise the second contingent as they were not responsible for their botched training or poor leadership; both conditions were the result of decisions made higher up. Even so, the most unwarranted criticism came from Kitchener himself, when in July 1901 he debated sending the second

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<sup>104</sup> The civilian and Yeomanry doctors that vetted the second contingent accepted lower levels of fitness than the army. *Ibid*, p. 289.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, p. 309.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*.



contingent back home despite being the root cause of their underperformance. He eventually commented a month later that, 'the yeomanry have been doing better lately. We have got rid of a good many that were not worth five shillings a day and...I am now getting more value out of the best of them. [However,] there are still some that I cannot trust in the field.'<sup>107</sup> Major Allenby also showed enormous frustration with the force when he stated that, 'these yeomen are useless. After being some months in the field they learn a bit, but by the time they are of any use, they have probably been captured two or three times, presenting the Boers on each occasion with a horse, rifle and 150 rounds of ammunition.'<sup>108</sup> As chapter six will show, this would not be Allenby's last command of Yeomanry regiments, but for the most part his extreme opinion was in the minority. The more understanding Colonel Lucas – admittedly a Yeomanry colonel – summed up the sentiments of many when he stated defensively:

the second force proved itself to be a most splendid force. They had harder fighting probably than the first, and the reports of all the officers commanding those regiments were to the effect that they behaved themselves magnificently, and were a very fine force indeed. It was only sending them out before they were trained that was the great mistake – the men were right.<sup>109</sup>

Echoing these sentiments despite his embarrassment at Tweebosch, Methuen defended the second contingent saying that, 'I have seen many criticisms abusing the men for their want of pluck. It was not their fault, it was sending them out unprepared, and not...[providing adequate training] before they were in front of the enemy.'<sup>110</sup> He later went on to state that they had gained, 'in military knowledge to a surprising extent during the campaign...[and although] they bought their experience rather expensively at first...I could place implicit reliance in them after a short time.'<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Bennett, *Absent-Minded Beggars*, p. 193.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 186 & 193.

<sup>109</sup> Elgin Commission, *Minutes of Evidence*, Vol. I, 1904, p. 277.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, p. 122.

<sup>111</sup> Elgin Commission, *Minutes of Evidence*, Vol. II, 1904, p. 124. For the predominantly positive regimental impressions of the second contingent see: TNA, WO 108/375. Report of the Deputy Adjutant-General of the Force Regarding the Raising of Drafts and New Battalions for the Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa, pp. 120-130.

Colonel F. J. Graves of the 83<sup>rd</sup> Regimental District that had raised much of the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion in 1900 from the greater Belfast area, stated to the Lucas committee that, 'not one in 100...[had] ever fired with a military rifle before', and that he allowed through a number of men that were acceptable riders, but did not reach the shooting grade. Worse still, only 30 of his original 1,175 had previous service experience and many were clearly not natural horsemen.<sup>112</sup> That said, past and present commentators have channelled criticism towards the poor performance of leadership at Lindley and not the soldierly attitude of the men. Reading between the lines of other commentators, it is clear that the rest of the first contingent required the same probation period and, after commanding the Yeomanry for seven months in South Africa, Major-General Brabazon wrote that, 'now that they have gained experience, [they] are as valuable a corps of fighting men as ever wore the Queen's uniform'.<sup>113</sup> Unfortunately, as one observer wrote, it took time for men to become efficient in this way, 'however educated your material...[and] knowing what we know of the capabilities of young and green troops in mounted war, we may say with confidence that the authorities were ill-advised when they failed to enforce the "until the end of the war" clause...[which has led to] the exigencies of the service [to be] sacrificed to satisfy the garrulous impatience on the part of home-abiding politicians'.<sup>114</sup>

It is unclear what some commanders expected from the Yeomanry in the field, but hindsight suggests it was too much. Experience added enormously to efficiency, but in a confusingly contradictory manner, those with the least knowledge were forced into an apprenticeship facing battle weary but determined Boers. Officers were in short supply and equally inexperienced from the start, and many of the first contingent men left the field within months of arriving. Although there were men within the ranks of the right background and intelligence to fill their places, asking them to take on such responsibilities in the field had consequences for the men in their charge.<sup>115</sup> Brabazon stated that it was, 'the regimental officers [that] pulled [them] through', and there is evidence to suggest that Home Yeomanry subalterns did a fine job once they gained experience.<sup>116</sup> Home Yeomanry Squadron Commanders and Colonels, on the other hand, certainly seem to have been out of their depth on occasion and at times

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<sup>112</sup> The Lucas Committee, 1902, Appendix 52, pp. 187-188.

<sup>113</sup> TNA, WO 108/263. Major-General Brabazon's Report on the Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa, p. 2

<sup>114</sup> 'The Intelligence Officer' *On the Heels of De Wet*, p. 47

<sup>115</sup> Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I, 1904, p. 305.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 296 and 310.

simply not up to the commands allocated.<sup>117</sup> With the lowered social composition of the second contingent, it proved to be an error to hand out commissions to veteran Yeomanry on the basis that their time in service alone would suffice.<sup>118</sup> The Gipps Committee that was formed to investigate this issue uncovered that a significant proportion of interviews had not taken place and former commanding officers had not been approached for character references or to validate qualifications.<sup>119</sup> This was ultimately due to time constraints, but the long term outcome was the need to borrow nearly 60 regular officers from units in South Africa, coupled with constant weeding of inefficient and undesirable men.<sup>120</sup> Nonetheless, given their burgeoning numbers and the speed at which they were raised and put to work, we should perhaps praise and admire the energy and resolve of the two fighting contingents in light of their limited experience and appallingly inadequate instruction.

Public perceptions and support of the force can initially be said to have been exceptionally good and it is unusual for a regimental history not to speak of an enthusiastic send off.<sup>121</sup> The state of recruitment itself also proved this in some measure. The *Daily News* estimated that 20,000 applications for service had been made by 27 December 1899, 9,000 of which were entered on the first day of recruitment.<sup>122</sup> The same paper, on 16 January 1900, featured a report from Suffolk Street (the office of the Imperial Yeomanry Committee) where the correspondent spoke to a man who had been queuing for three days and was yet to get in.<sup>123</sup> Whilst it is likely that these reports were exaggerated, the committees that followed the war stated the enthusiasm of the public proved the potential to recruit far beyond the target of 10,000 men.<sup>124</sup> In a similar fashion to the Kitchener Armies of 1914, within a few days of recruitment opening, *The Times* decided to print the details of hundreds of men joining the Yeomanry. This coverage included the Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Devon, Gloucestershire, Kent, Nottinghamshire, Worcestershire, Buckinghamshire,

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<sup>117</sup> Colonel Earl of Scarborough declined a command believing himself not sufficiently 'up to date'. He stated that others were not so sensible. *Ibid*, p. 310.

<sup>118</sup> For example, every man in the 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion that reenlisted received a commission, bar one who became a Troop Sergeant. McKenzie Rew, *Records of the Rough Riders*, p. 102.

<sup>119</sup> TNA, WO 108/107. The Gipps Committee, p. 2.

<sup>120</sup> Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I, 1904, p. 305.

<sup>121</sup> For examples see: Orr, A. S. *Scottish Yeomanry in South Africa, 1900-1901* (Henderwick, Glasgow, 1901), pp. 3-4; and Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry*, p. 11.

<sup>122</sup> *Daily News*, 27/12/1899.

<sup>123</sup> *Daily News*, 23/12/1899; and *Daily News*, 16/01/1900.

<sup>124</sup> Colonel Lucas thought they could have had an 'unlimited number'. Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I, 1904, p. 276.

Lothian, Montgomeryshire, and Yorkshire contingents, deliberately encouraging competition.<sup>125</sup> Offices in Dublin were similarly well visited with 230 applications in ten days, in spite of the fact that Ireland had lacked Yeomanry infrastructure since the 1830s.<sup>126</sup> Miller has shown that, in Nottinghamshire, there were enough recruits on the first day of recruitment to make an entire company, and that in general the sheer number of recruits overwhelmed the machinery.<sup>127</sup> The periodical press also responded positively. Gentlemen's magazines in particular saw Yeomanry service worthy of the highest praise, emphasising the abilities of the hunting classes and the aptitude of men who would not usually find themselves at war. To *Baily's Magazine of Sports and Pastimes* there was no class more suitable to hunt the Boers in the Transvaal and it is clear that in some circles this became an excuse to exaggerate the qualities of a martial class within British society.<sup>128</sup>

Subscriptions to the central and county funds obviously speak volumes about public support and their importance was highlighted by the Lucas Committee. Here it was stated that they were essential to the rapid and efficient organisation of the force.<sup>129</sup> The central fund received at least 112 subscriptions from a wide variety of people – including Royalty and big business – and eventually amounted to an impressive £66,000.<sup>130</sup> The input of the gold and diamond magnates, Messrs Wernher and Beit, alone was startling and amounted to more than 90 per cent of this figure at £50,000. They also added the offer of sourcing 2,000 horses through their agents in South Africa.<sup>131</sup> The dominance of this contribution not only highlights their tacit support for Milner's South African vision, but also hints at the importance of the mother country in making their lucrative business work.<sup>132</sup> Perhaps more interesting, however, were the county funds. Over and above the capitation grant offered by the War Office, these produced a total even higher at £80,000, with some counties

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<sup>125</sup> *The Times* 01/01/1900 and 02/01/1900.

<sup>126</sup> *The Times* 01/01/1900.

<sup>127</sup> Miller, *Volunteers on the Veld*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>128</sup> *Baily's Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, 01/03/1900.

<sup>129</sup> Lucas Committee, 1902, p. 70; and Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I, 1904, p. 275.

<sup>130</sup> Lucas Committee stated the figure from 112 people to be £55,257/19s/7d. Lucas Committee, 1902, Appendix 98, p. 235; In the Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence. Vol. I, 1904, Lucas quotes a figure of £66,000 'in round figures' so it has been assumed that further contributions took place after the first committee report, p. 275.

<sup>131</sup> Lucas Committee, 1902, p. 54.

<sup>132</sup> Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p. 89.

amassing in the region of £25,000 single-handedly.<sup>133</sup> This money, which remained available on a local level, explains why some companies received a healthy number of gifts before departure.<sup>134</sup>

Similarly, the support for the Imperial Yeomanry Hospital Fund proved further mobilisation of wider society behind the movement. Ladies Curzon and Chesham headed the organising committee and appealed to the press for column inches and support, which they received in excess.<sup>135</sup> In their initial appeal the papers donated £127,000 to the cause, whilst the culmination of public funds in 1902 amounted to a further £17,000.<sup>136</sup> The scheme appealed to the individual as a £50 donation earned a named bed, but also to larger institutions that traditionally felt themselves associated with the force.<sup>137</sup> At the beginning of July 1900 *Baily's Magazine of Sports and Pastimes* published a list of contributions from 103 Hunts from across the United Kingdom and announced the opening of the 'Hunt Ward' with the £9,241 15s 7d acquired.<sup>138</sup> The outcome of all this support was a civilian staffed base hospital at Deelfontein near De Aar, another at Pretoria some time later, and a mobile field hospital. All would service the whole army, though any yeomen invalided was sent to one of the permanent bases if possible.<sup>139</sup> One civilian doctor described these hospitals as superior to those of the AMS as there was never a question of finance or want for procuring equipment. Answerable to the committee and not a chain of command, the hospitals remained well supplied and, in terms of quality of service, 'as good as they could be expected to be.'<sup>140</sup> Further to the spirit of this charitable exercise, excess funds at the end of the project were to contribute towards the education and care of children of yeomen orphaned by the war and those men invalided as a consequence of their service.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Lucas believed that £30,000 was probably 'debtible against the War Office' because the counties supported their companies whilst the WO attempted to get a grip of the situation. This further highlights the importance of the privately raised funds. Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I, 1904, p. 275.

<sup>134</sup> Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry*, p. 9.

<sup>135</sup> *The Times*, for example, ran stories on a daily basis throughout the early months of 1900.

<sup>136</sup> *The Times*, 11/08/1902.

<sup>137</sup> *The Times*, 06/01/1900.

<sup>138</sup> *Baily's Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, 01/07/1900.

<sup>139</sup> Branch hospitals also existed at various times at 'MacKenzie's Farm', Maitland, Elandsfontein, and Johannesburg. *The Times*, 11/08/1902; and Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. I, 1904, p. 302.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, p. 501.

<sup>141</sup> *The Times*, 11/08/1902.

Unsurprisingly, much of the satirical press were not as supportive. Early in January 1900 *Pick-Me-Up* attacked the Yeomanry in its established satirical guise as a snobbish institution, with one cartoon featuring a lady asking why a gentleman had not signed up. He replied: 'and wear Khaki? My dear girl, nothing but pink suits me. I wrote to Chesham and said I'd come if he'd make it pink. But he's a selfish fellow. Khaki or nothing, he said – a ridiculous choice – and so I refused point blank.'<sup>142</sup> *Punch* also participated and later had any number of entertaining recommendations for the Imperial Yeomanry, undoubtedly influenced by the unfortunate incidents experienced early in the war. One article published a number of months after the Lindley disaster listed eleven points for the improvement of outpost duty recommending, for example:

When being charged by the enemy, go fours about and gallop for all you are worth; it is just as agreeable to be prodded in the back as in the chest, and gives the enemy more satisfaction. To extend, or work to the flanks, might deprive your enemy of useful experience.<sup>143</sup>

After nine other similar suggestions, it finally concluded, 'that the best motto for Yeomanry troopers is "Point de Zele"'.<sup>144</sup> This was a little strong in regard to the enthusiasm and efforts shown by many citizen soldiers. Nonetheless, it did neatly sum up the increasingly sour feelings of a portion of the public who would be further spurred by what would soon look to be a rise in pay and lowering of standards.

The oddities and loopholes that appeared in the hastily raised force also offered exceptional material to the editors of the satirical press. Another *Punch* article, published during the procurement of the first contingent, outlined the fictional diary of a soldier. Mocking the evident problems with health in British society, it mostly attacked the government's inability to enforce standards and vet the intake of men:

Monday: find the Loamshire may not go South for a month, resign and join Mudshire...

Tuesday: Up before the Riding Master. Passed. Interview with the doctor unsatisfactory. Chuck the Mudshire and enter the Clodshire.

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<sup>142</sup> *Pick-Me-Up*, Issue 589, 13/01/1900.

<sup>143</sup> *Punch*, 29/08/1900.

<sup>144</sup> 'Point de Zele' - 'without zeal'.

Wednesday: Clodshire examining medical board capital. Pass in triumph. Up before the Riding Master. Failed! Must get out somehow...

Saturday: Receive two letters – one from home authorities saying I won't do. Other from a cousin in South Africa. "Come over" he says, "and they will be delighted to have you. Better trust to the colonies than Pall Mall." Think so, too.<sup>145</sup>

It was the memory of the second contingent, however, that lent itself to public discussion. *The Times* was just one forum for this dialogue and printed a variety of open letters addressed to the editor that ranged from questioning the abilities of the force to attacking those who derided it. As earlier analysis has shown, the government's intention had been to draw on the same classes as the first contingent, and to some extent they were not totally unsuccessful, but the majority seem to have been neither natural horsemen nor soldiers. As one contributor, signed 'a London clergyman', rather astutely stated:

to transport [young men] from the desk to the front...and pay them about four times the pay of a trained Regular... and expect them to follow successfully after the Boers who can ride and know the country [is delusional]. They can hardly have learnt horsemanship on board the transport, and if they are mounted on such horses as the war demands, their horse must for long present more terrors to them than the enemy.<sup>146</sup>

Many first contingent Yeomen also appear to have been keen to distance their own force from those that followed by seeking a connection with the 19<sup>th</sup> century institution. This was a trend that continued in the years that followed with the publishing of individual's memoirs like those of Gage.<sup>147</sup> On the other hand, defenders of later contingents were quick to show the likeness by pointing out that most of the officers for the initial contingent were not sourced from the Home Yeomanry and that in some cases regiments put forward as little as one subaltern.<sup>148</sup> Nonetheless, hindsight and common knowledge suggest it was the former opinions that held the most influence. Such attacks, however, were not only restricted to the

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<sup>145</sup> *Punch*, 21/03/1900.

<sup>146</sup> *The Times*, 09/04/1901.

<sup>147</sup> See Gage's quote on page 190. Gage, *Records of the Dorset Imperial Yeomanry*, pp. 144-145.

<sup>148</sup> *The Times*, 27/08/1901; and *The Times*, 30/08/1901.

military community or correspondence pages of newspapers. Cecil Norton M.P. lambasted the Secretary of State for War, St John Brodrick, and Financial Secretary to the War Office, Lord Stanley, in the House of Commons regarding the qualifications of officers and the conduct of the later forces at the front. Later he also described the second contingent as, '[militarily] practically valueless...besides being...an extravagant cost to the tax payer'.<sup>149</sup> Others, such as Sir Charles Dilke, were inclined to agree and even took the argument to consider the force as a whole.<sup>150</sup> Despite the defence later vocalised by many senior officers and Brodrick's vain attempt to convince his cabinet colleagues of their worth, history has dealt the second contingent – and to some extent the whole force – an undesirable reputation.<sup>151</sup> For the most part, however, public interest waned more than it turned hostile. Criticism existed in abundance, but mostly where it might be expected, and as interest tailed off with the closing stages of the war, so did reporting.

The Imperial Yeomanry forms a case study in its own right. Difficult to associate with the home force beyond name, it reflected a broader cross-section of society with different aims and beliefs. As a whole, it provided a fascinating glimpse into the social pressures and expectations of the nation. The middle and upper-class men who found themselves caught up in the initial wave of excitement and enthusiasm were principally civilians and joined for innumerable reasons. At the same time, very few can have been tempted by the money. The working-class involvement proved to be equally significant, but this was not simply due to disproportionate pay or domestic conditions. The labour markets that some have described so hostile were not all suffering. By April 1901 *The Times* reported that the decline in manufacturing capacity and employment described in the previous few months was giving way to an improvement in the most important groups of industry, except textiles.<sup>152</sup> It then becomes harder to understand why an individual might have left a hard won and hard kept job for 5s a day for an unpredictable period in which they might be killed or crippled. Assuming that the majority of attestation forms represent a degree of truth, it might also be expected that there would be more than the inconsequential levels of the unemployed. Evidence like this, combined with the substantial contribution of the

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<sup>149</sup> *House of Commons Debate*, 07/03/1902. Vol. 104, Para. 712-713; 24/03/1902. Vol. 105, Para. 821; 15/04/1902. Vol. 106, Para. 271-272; and *The Times*, 03/09/1901

<sup>150</sup> *The Times*, 21/01/1902.

<sup>151</sup> TNA, CAB 37/59/122. 26/11/1901. Circular from St. John Brodrick on reports from officers commanding Imperial Yeomanry units for the benefit of the cabinet.

<sup>152</sup> *The Times*, 16/04/1901.



working-class to the first contingent, asks serious questions of the 'desperation' model suggested by some and builds further on the idea of popular imperialism and the enthusiasm of youth.

As a result, the organisation of the force in light of its composition begins to look odd. Pushed for and organised by a collection of senior Yeomanry officers, it is clear that a number wished this contribution to the war effort to be the Yeomanry's. On the whole, however, the force was predominantly instructed and led by regular officers and pre-war civilians. Although it has been shown that the pre-war Yeomanry officer corps played a successful part at subaltern level, even this contribution appears to have been small. As time progressed the gulf between the two forces became more obvious, and a mere 390 men joined their associated home units on their return from South Africa at the beginning of 1902.<sup>153</sup> What the Yeomanry infrastructure did excellently was act as a connection between county and central administration, with local magnates continuing to play a role in increasing the profile of the force on a local level. As one contributor to *The Times* stated, cutting them from the loop when raising the second contingent meant losing, 'that useful means of getting at local feeling'; it did not, however, stop the men coming.<sup>154</sup> As time progressed more of these men came from outside the Yeomanry's sphere of influence, and in a sense represented the Yeomanry no more than any of the hastily raised colonial corps in South Africa. On a more positive note, they proved what could be achieved in times of national emergency, especially with an inflated wage.

Whether the government, its committees, and senior officers truly grasped the shifting nature of the contingents is hard to say. Nonetheless, towards the end of the war and in the immediate reflection that became the Elgin Commission, senior figures like Harris and Lucas spoke of attracting 'other classes' to keep the Home Yeomanry extant.<sup>155</sup> At the time of raising the Imperial Yeomanry, however, this understanding appears far less evident. The thinking behind the settling schemes was clearly ill-conceived and heavily weighted towards the archaic understanding of terminology and definition: the Yeomanry had never solely recruited 'yeomen'. Apart from being largely unsuccessful, the idea of livestock breeding neglected to ensure the presence of the husbandry skills to construct an effective horse breeding programme. Further to

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<sup>153</sup> Annual Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting, 1902, p. 23.

<sup>154</sup> *The Times*, 27/06/1902.

<sup>155</sup> Harris Committee, 1901, pp.11-12; and Elgin Commission, Minutes of Evidence. Vol. I, 1904, p. 284.

this, it is unclear how strong the government's demand would be for such animals in a time of peace. Whilst the police forces and large farms offered short term occupation, there appears to have been little thought given over to the numbers required when peace was secured. From start to finish, the terms of service were short and, when the money improved, so too did the desire for short-term escapism. However, at the time, the government and military authorities do not seem to have grasped the fact that they were dealing with a different force with different skills and different class backgrounds.

The Imperial Yeomanry was a melting pot of class and regional backgrounds and, with time, lost its county affiliations. It is clear that in raising the force many expected to put the Home Yeomanry into foreign service and this reflected the way in which the government marketed the force as well the work they hoped to put them to. Unfortunately for commanders on the ground in South Africa, it does not seem to have been articulated that many of these men had very little experience and that leadership was clearly not to be relied upon. This, combined with poor training, presented a nearly insurmountable hurdle that was only carried once professional officers were loaned or when the ratio of Yeomanry in columns was diluted. Whilst there is no reason to believe that all contingents could not have performed adequately if given the time to train and prepare, it was a failure of communication that led to their misuse and criticism. Nonetheless, these criticisms often belie the significance of the venture and unfairly undermine the cost paid by the Imperial Yeomanry. The force suffered 3,771 casualties during the war: 537 killed in action, 864 died of disease, 1,367 wounded, and 1,003 declared either missing or captured. The professional cavalry suffered 3,623 casualties during the war: 618 killed in action, 966 died of disease, 1,443 wounded, and 596 missing or captured. The nearest any of the other British auxiliaries came to these casualty figure was the 2,453 taken by the Militia; the CIV receiving only 133 and the Volunteer Service Companies 755. Though the proportion of yeomen captured or missing was practically ten per cent greater than the regular cavalry, it was not as high as the Militia. In addition, more than 50 per cent of the Imperial Yeomanry's casualties were a direct result of fighting; though the CIV could claim 53 per cent, for the Militia this figure amounted to 24 per cent, and for the Volunteer Service Companies, it was just 21 per cent. Put simply, the Imperial Yeomanry took the brunt of the fighting when compared to the other auxiliaries raised

in the United Kingdom.<sup>156</sup> The experiences of war raised many contentious issues for the Yeomanry, some of which have been addressed in chapter one. Most importantly, however, it opened the debate about their future purpose and organisation and laid the bed for reform. This was an opportunity that both supporters and opponents had long awaited; unfortunately neither would be able to claim a victory before the First World War.

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<sup>156</sup> Amery, L. S. (ed) *The Times History of the War in South Africa – Vol. VII, Index and Appendices* (W. Clowes, London, 1909), pp. 17-23.

## Chapter VI

### The First World War, 1914-1918

The Great War mobilised British society in a way not previously experienced. Six years before its outbreak the Yeomanry Cavalry had been incorporated into the Territorial Force, designed to reinforce an expeditionary component of the British army after a period of intensive training. Before the majority of yeomen were directly engaged in the conflict, however, most were allocated to home defence. When they were engaged, many regiments found themselves serving in unfamiliar roles and allotted to marginal theatres. This contribution was no less significant, but the controversy that plagued their late departure for active service caused many yeomen discomfort.<sup>1</sup> Many of those who remained in East Anglia into 1916 wrote of the embarrassment of relative safety, whilst others attempted to transfer to active theatres. Nonetheless, those regiments which were engaged in Gallipoli, North Africa, Salonika, and the Middle East exhibited not only the skill and wherewithal to fight an underestimated enemy, but also supplied valuable reinforcements to the Western Front for the final offensives of 1918. Experiences were by no means interchangeable, and the Special Reserve regiments as well as a chosen few amongst the Territorial Force found themselves shipped to the France and Belgium as divisional (later corps) cavalry. Most, however, remained on the English coast until shipped to more distant theatres, often as dismounted 'Yeofantry'; though some were returned to their horses, more than 40 per cent would not come into contact with them for the rest of the war.<sup>2</sup> Quite distinguishable from the campaign in South Africa, the use and organisation of the Yeomanry had none of the confidence or dynamism exhibited there. The Yeomanry has arguably become a forgotten army of the First World War and this chapter will aim to redress the balance.

Like the rest of the Territorial Force, the Yeomanry Cavalry formed two, and later three lines shortly after the declaration of war. The 2<sup>nd</sup> line initially provided a depot for raising and shipping drafts to the 1<sup>st</sup> line. The 3<sup>rd</sup> line was raised to make more of the available manpower by handing it the depot duties, allowing the 2<sup>nd</sup> line

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<sup>1</sup> TNA, WO32/5266. CIGS memorandum 23/09/14 - *Reorganising the Territorial Force for Foreign Service and Home Defence*; and Appendix 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ponsonby, Lieutenant-Colonel C. *West Kent (Q.O.) Yeomanry and 10<sup>th</sup> (Yeomanry) Batt. The Buffs, 1914-1919* (Melrose, London, 1920), p. 55.

the freedom to be utilised on active service.<sup>3</sup> These changes, however, were not made efficiently or with much tact, and consistent broken promises made to the 2<sup>nd</sup> line of the Yeomanry caused much disillusionment. Having been filled relatively quickly, the overspill from 1<sup>st</sup> line regiments often entered the second. Despite enthusiasm for overseas service and having signed the Imperial Service Obligation (ISO), many 2<sup>nd</sup> line regiments found themselves stuck on the British coast; as will be outlined, this took its toll in transfers and commissions.<sup>4</sup> Of those that did remain, some merged with the 3<sup>rd</sup> line and all were eventually converted to cyclists in 1916, a number later transferring to Ireland in 1918.

Early in the war much of the 1<sup>st</sup> line served in peripheral theatres. The 55 regiments of Yeomanry and three regiments of Special Reserve cavalry in existence before the war began were expanded with the raising of the Welsh Horse, second regiments of the North Irish, South Irish and King Edward's Horse, and a third Scottish Horse regiment late in the summer of 1914.<sup>5</sup> They were a significant body of men, but for all this latent manpower, only four regiments were obliged to go overseas without consent; the Special Reserve regiments and the Northumberland Hussars. Haldane's reforms had not enforced foreign service on the Territorial Force and the Territorial Associations lacked fundamental mechanisms and powers essential to expand and reinforce the expeditionary force. The Northumberland Hussars combined with the Special Reserve cavalry of the North and South Irish Horse and King Edward's Horse were the only regiments that could leave the country without taking further obligations; the others were balloted and had to replace those who declined.<sup>6</sup>

As Appendix 4 shows, the diversity of theatres and roles experienced by Yeomanry regiments varied considerably. Not only did the force see service in every theatre of the war, but many regiments served in more than one; some in as many as four. With approximately half of the regiments remaining mounted in the Middle-East

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<sup>3</sup> Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', p. 132.

<sup>4</sup> Exceptions: 2/1<sup>st</sup> Northumberland Hussars (to France as corps cavalry, then a battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers); the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Northamptonshire Yeomanry (one squadron to France in winter of 1916/17, later absorbed by tank corps); and the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Westminster Dragoons (absorbed into tank corps in the summer of 1918). James, Brigadier E. A. *British Regiments, 1914-1918* (Samson, London, 1978).

<sup>5</sup> North Irish, South Irish and King Edward's Horse were the Special Reserve cavalry regiments. The Irish Horse had this title since the Haldane reforms, whilst King Edward's Horse was transferred from the Yeomanry in 1912. *The Times*, 31/07/1912; and James, *British Regiments, 1914-1918*.

<sup>6</sup> Only two squadrons of North and one squadron of South Irish Horse went to France in 1914. King Edward's Horse did not land until 1915. The Oxfordshire and Northumberland Yeomanry were in the line by September and October 1914 respectively; both at regimental strength.

or on the Western Front, the other half eventually converted to infantry in the 74<sup>th</sup> 'Broken Spur' Division or Machine Gun Battalions. The same appendix also provides some understanding of the difficulties faced in placing these soldiers in this conflict. It might be suggested that this was connected to the misguided belief that an opportunity might arise to use cavalry in an exploitation role, using the Yeomanry as a reserve. This, we know, never happened, although the war did provide better opportunities in the Middle-East. Indeed, Palestine was the ideal country for a mounted force and it is true that Allenby was adamant that his army should be mobile in the field. However, these operations still demanded the ability to fight efficiently on foot over anything else.<sup>7</sup> To take the place of the mounted arm in the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, the Yeomanry was also up against stiff competition in the form of the ANZAC mounted regiments and, ultimately, there was not room for them all. Many Yeomanry regiments had agreed to leave the UK without their horses on the promise that they would be remounted in Egypt, but this left them little leverage when it came to getting them back after being rerouted to fight dismounted in Gallipoli.<sup>8</sup> To much the same end, a brief look at those regiments used mounted elsewhere shows the majority acted as divisional and, later, corps cavalry; useful as they were for communications, traffic control, and provost duties, none but the Bedfordshire, Essex, Leicestershire, Oxfordshire, and North Somerset Yeomanry regiments were wanted or needed in the cavalry brigades. The reality of almost all theatres was the demand for infantry. Unfortunately there was not a wholesale conversion of the Yeomanry and the 74<sup>th</sup> Division took too long to form. The dismounted brigades of this would-be division saw out the Gallipoli campaign and 1916 in Egypt in the compromised formation of dismounted cavalry. This lessened their contribution to whichever theatre they were in due to their structure, training, and number of men, which in turn limited the work entrusted to them. As one yeoman put it, 'we had long realised that in our eccentric form as dismounted Yeomanry we should only be given the odd jobs', and that, 'we were not pulling our weight either as Yeomanry or infantry'.<sup>9</sup>

During the war in South Africa the Yeomanry had filled something of a vacuum as Mounted Rifles and it is clear that this was a model that many were happy

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<sup>7</sup> Hughes, M. *Allenby in Palestine – the Middle East Correspondence of Field Marshal Viscount Allenby* (ARS, London, 2004), p. 143.

<sup>8</sup> IWM Sound Archive (8272), Edwin Richard Pope, Tape 1. Recorded 1984.

<sup>9</sup> Ogilvie, Major D. D. *The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. YEO.) Battn. R.H. 1914-1919*. (John Murray, London, 1921), pp. 39 & 41.

to revive. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the conflict, the army had little need for Mounted Rifles. Palestine certainly would offer greater 'liberty of manoeuvre', but the glut of Yeomanry and – most important of all – imperial horse regiments in the theatre, meant that some would be forced to abandon their horses, their training, and their history.<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere, a combination of the theatre of war, the shortage of manpower, and agreements made prior to shipping meant that many yeomen would not sit astride a horse after leaving Great Britain.

The scale of the First World War was responsible for the enormous and diverse demands on manpower. This became a significant issue when trying to balance the demands of manufacturing and civilian services with manpower at the front. Pre-war planning was in place for the army's expansion, but it was weak and was overshadowed by the personal enterprise of Lord Kitchener. One of the weaknesses of Haldane's reforms was the failure to secure the Territorial Force for service overseas, relying instead on a system of voluntary subscription. This Imperial Service Section (ISS) was nothing more than a force on paper, the Yeomanry subdivision attracting fewer than 4,000 men in 1913.<sup>11</sup> Of this figure, 12 per cent were of the Northumberland Hussars – the only imperial service *regiment* – with the outstanding 88 per cent distributed between the other 54 Yeomanry regiments.<sup>12</sup> Although the majority of regiments rapidly agreed to imperial service in August 1914, the ambiguity of the pre-war situation strengthened the arguments against utilising the Territorial machinery. Further issues came to light as the war progressed: new Territorial recruits could sign on exclusively for home service until March 1915, and pre-war Territorials could seek their discharge when their terms of service came to an end until May 1916.<sup>13</sup> To put this into perspective, between October 1913 and September 1915 there were 13,218 men whose engagements were due to expire with the Yeomanry before new legislation came into effect. Based on the strength when these calculations were made in 1913, the Yeomanry stood to lose more than 57 per cent of its pre-war strength – an even worse position than the Territorial infantry.<sup>14</sup> This potential loss was worsened by the failure to reach the pre-war establishment of

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<sup>10</sup> KSYM, KSY: 8111. Jarvis, Lieutenant-Colonel A. Weston. *Jottings from an active life*. Ch. VII.

<sup>11</sup> The ISS was formed after the Boer war. The actual total was 3,840. *BPP*: Cd. 7252, 1914: *GAR British Army*, 1913, pp. 122 & 129.

<sup>12</sup> This figure excludes Special Reserve Cavalry. A crude average shows each regiment had approximately 440 men, and just over 62 (or 14.1%) in the ISS. *Ibid*.

<sup>13</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 222.

<sup>14</sup> The infantry stood to lose 48%. *General Annual Report of the British Army*, 1913, p. 129.

officers and other ranks – which by October 1913 was 1,446 men short – and was further compounded by the failure to attract more than 16 per cent of this figure to the Imperial Service Section.<sup>15</sup>

The limitations of these arrangements are clear with hindsight. Nonetheless, it should be noted that, in relative terms, this ISS contribution was twice the size of the Territorial infantry's. Furthermore, the Yeomanry's 5.6 per cent shortfall in recruiting compared favourably with the infantry's, which was a quarter short of its established strength. In spite of these vaguely superior statistics, it would be wrong to suggest that the pre-war position of the Yeomanry prepared it for wartime expansion. Haldane's reforms had not attracted the numbers hoped for and short term enlistment had left its mark on the effective strength. Of the NCOs and other ranks, only 7,774 (34 per cent) of their total effective strength had four or more years experience, and only 2,000 (nine per cent) of these had ten or more years. These figures are only marginally better than the infantry's, which at 30 per cent and 9 per cent respectively, suggest that the Yeomanry was retaining slightly more of its post-reform men.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, for men who trained as a regiment for a maximum of fifteen days a year, the Yeomanry remained an immature force. Added to these problems was the confused state of pre-war doctrine, so although 92 per cent of its effective strength had camped in 1913 – again a superior figure against the infantry's 89 per cent – many Yeomanry officers suspected they would require significant training after mobilisation to give any account of themselves as cavalry or Mounted Infantry.<sup>17</sup> Though this was factored into official Territorial planning, the scepticism of the force's officers was bound to add to the uncertainty of their position in any expeditionary force.

As might be expected, regimental reactions to mobilisation differed a great deal. Although the Northumberland Hussars were already committed as an Imperial Service regiment, the Earl of Chester's Yeomanry quickly signed the ISO on mobilisation. The whole regiment was ready to move by the second week of August, with two squadrons ready within three days. Having replaced the deficit of those not medically suitable – including one officer who had been denied, on the same grounds, to serve in the South African War – and those on home service, it is clear that the majority of the rank and file wanted to serve overseas and that time-expired men

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 120 & 129.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>17</sup> Ponsonby, *West Kent (Q.O.) Yeomanry*, p. 3.



flocked back to the regiment.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry claimed to have been complete by 12 August and, perhaps even more impressive, the whole of the First South Midland Mounted Brigade volunteered complete by the same date.<sup>19</sup> The Shropshire Yeomanry reported that 85 per cent of their rank and file had taken the pledge and, although the 1<sup>st</sup> County of London saw a probable 19 per cent of their number lost to home service, they filled the void with relative ease throughout August.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, one regiment reported on the popularity of the mounted arm in the city, stating that it allowed them to seek out the experienced.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, coming mostly from post-war regimental histories, these examples had a vested interest in providing a positive story for internal regimental consumption and the reading public.

Understandably a more critical insight is found in diaries and private papers. Cuthbert Headlam's diary offers a shrewder look into the workings of a Yeomanry regiment and raises questions of this loyalty and enthusiasm. As an officer of the Bedfordshire Yeomanry, he had volunteered on principle, but was surprised when only 60 per cent of the rank and file came forward. The other ranks, however, 'did not respond as we expected', he noted before writing to his wife that, 'it rather disgusts me to find that the youths who have no ties in the world are the ones who appear to hang back'.<sup>22</sup> This was not an isolated incident. Lieutenant-Colonel Weston Jarvis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> County of London (Sharpshooters) found to his 'great disappointment' that 106 men stepped forward after being asked how many would *not* sign the ISO. Using the return of 1913, this amounts to nearly a quarter of the rank and file.<sup>23</sup> In Scotland the situation varied, though in his attempt to hastily form the Scottish Horse Mounted Brigade in early August, Lieutenant-Colonel Tullibardine found 100 men from his two regiments were unwilling to take the obligation.<sup>24</sup> Thomas Jeffrey described the lack of contact between the North and West Somerset Yeomanry as a case of failing to volunteer. Having done so soon after mobilisation, the Northern regiment had

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<sup>18</sup> Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>19</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> SMMB: Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, and Worcestershire Yeomanry. *The Times*, 12/08/1914; and Ogilvie, *The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. YEO.) Battn. R.H. 1914-1919*, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Gladstone, *The Shropshire Yeomanry*, p. 191; The 1<sup>st</sup> County of London had to recruit 90 men to make up the numbers in August 1914. Stonham and Freeman, *Historical Records of the Middlesex Yeomanry*, p. 127; and BPP: Cd. 7254, 1914: Annual Return of the Territorial Force, 1913.

<sup>21</sup> Harrison-Ainsworth, *History and war records of the Surrey (QMR) Yeomanry*, p. 277.

<sup>22</sup> Beach, *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam*, pp. 53 & 55.

<sup>23</sup> KSYM, KSY: 8111. 11 August, 1914. Jarvis, Lieutenant-Colonel A. Weston. 'Diary of the War, 26 July, 1914 - 6 May, 1916'; and BPP: Cd. 7254, 1914: Annual Return of the Territorial Force, 1913.

<sup>24</sup> TNA, WO32/18570. Letter: Lieutenant-Colonel Tullibardine to General Wintour, 17/08/1914.

found a place on the Western Front.<sup>25</sup> When a similar opportunity had been presented to the West Somerset Yeomanry only two men of Jeffrey's troop stepped forward, the others he stated, 'hadn't had guts enough.'<sup>26</sup> Thomas Harding of the Montgomeryshire Yeomanry outlined a comparable example when his regiment moved to poor billets in Norfolk. The question was put to them at Hereford on their journey east and was met with a positive response, yet when asked again in Norfolk, fewer than half put themselves forward.<sup>27</sup> This was said to be more a reaction to the disparity in living conditions between officers and men, but it shows the 'bottom up' authority that could be exercised by Territorials.

As has been shown for the whole Territorial Force, a significant number of men joined only to serve at home.<sup>28</sup> The pre-war contingent was most likely to express this desire, though this did not suppress bitter feelings within regiments. Having joined the Sussex Yeomanry days before the outbreak of war due to his hunting connections, Siegfried Sassoon signed for Imperial Service. Considering himself part of a *corps d'élite* under selected officers, he was surprised by those who maintained their Territorial rights and noted that they were not allowed to forget their prudence.<sup>29</sup> Despite men having every right to make these decisions, commanding officers still tried to sway opinion. Coercion and bullying was not unusual and came to a head in September 1914 when the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Charles W. H. Douglas, issued a memorandum pertaining to the current and future organisation of the Territorial Force. In this it was stated that, 'considerations of home defence [for which the TF was raised] are being sacrificed to the idea of imperial service abroad'. The memorandum also included an appendix based on the summaries of divisional and brigade commanders regarding the neglect and contempt shown by regimental officers towards those men unwilling to volunteer for overseas service.<sup>30</sup> It seems that there was genuine surprise when the veil of territorial unity was lifted to reveal divisions, which often led to the ostracising of those who did not volunteer. On 11 August, for example, Lieutenant-Colonel Weston Jarvis told his home service men

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<sup>25</sup> IWM Sound Archive (7024), Thomas John Clifford Jeffrey. Recorded 1982.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> IWM Sound Archive (380), John Tomas Harding, Tape 6. Recording date unknown.

<sup>28</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, pp. 229-230; and McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War*, p. 75.

<sup>29</sup> Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, pp. 231-233.

<sup>30</sup> TNA, WO32/5266. CIGS memorandum 23/09/14 - *Reorganising the Territorial Force for Foreign Service and Home Defence*.

he, 'trusted they would volunteer for service abroad if required', explaining what their country demanded of them, and finished up stating, 'no doubt work would eventually be found sweeping the streets of London and walking down Piccadilly singing "Rule Britannia"'.<sup>31</sup> Officering regiments certainly did not run into the same problems, with the pre-war officers of the Scottish Horse and Bedfordshire Yeomanry volunteering 'to a man', whilst the Sharpshooters were inundated with fresh applications for commissions.<sup>32</sup> As Cuthbert Headlam suggested, however, for gazetted officers there really was no other course open. He thought it a great pity that, even for men of his age, a request to join the 2<sup>nd</sup> line was 'looked upon as being disgraced...[or] a failure', and it would seem that these judgements were inextricably relative to rank.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, despite the damning indictment of Jeffrey towards his 'gutless' comrades, and the mocking tone of Weston Jarvis, it is clear that a significant quantity of men saw themselves fulfilling the role they had attested for.

Those who chose not to sign the ISO, were too young, or were deemed unfit, could, until March 1915, sign for home service in the Yeomanry (or other Territorial arm) and defend this right until the Military Service Acts of the following year. Although 72 per cent of the Territorial rank and file accepted the ISO by 26 September 1914, the 28 per cent that declined are unaccounted for.<sup>34</sup> Yeomen were initially removed from the 2<sup>nd</sup> line and grouped as squadrons in the Provisional Brigades for home defence, but their treatment there could tally with the most negative regimental experiences. For example, the 9<sup>th</sup> Provisional Brigade Yeomanry Squadron was supposed to operate as divisional cavalry, yet they could do nothing more than exercise their horses for want of saddlery and other equipment.<sup>35</sup> Others had even less and, as with the Provisional formations in general, this lack of equipment and the high turnover of men and units meant that esprit de corps was never developed.<sup>36</sup> These yeomen were later reabsorbed into the 2<sup>nd</sup> line with some resistance and, in time, moved to the coast, filling the void left by the 1<sup>st</sup> line that by

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<sup>31</sup> KSYM, KSY: 8111. 11 August, 1914. Jarvis, Lieutenant-Colonel A. Weston. 'Diary of the War, 26 July 1914 – 6 May 1916'.

<sup>32</sup> TNA, WO32/18570. Letter: Lieutenant-Colonel Tullibardine to General Wintour, 17/08/1914; Beach, *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam*, pp. 53 & 55; and KSYM, KSY: 8111. 6-10 August, 1914. Jarvis, Lieutenant-Colonel A. Weston. 'Diary of the War, 26 July, 1914 – 6 May, 1916'.

<sup>33</sup> Beach, *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam*, pp.53, 55 & 64.

<sup>34</sup> Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 230.

<sup>35</sup> TNA, WO95/5458. Provisional Brigade War Diaries, Home Forces, 02/10/1915.

<sup>36</sup> Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*, pp. 101-105.

March 1916 had gone overseas.<sup>37</sup> As Basil Peto observed, this meant ‘that the men who were with such care weeded out from these 2<sup>nd</sup> line units twelve months ago...are brought back again into the units from which they were drafted’.<sup>38</sup> He went on to criticise the proposed move to take the fit Imperial Service men in these Yeomanry squadrons and post them to the 3<sup>rd</sup> line, assumedly for use as drafts. As he suggested, this broke up the unit, separated the officers, and offered little encouragement to those who hoped to travel abroad as a unit.

The decisions that determined the fate of home forces changed frequently and were often conveyed in ambiguous orders. In the face of consistent promises in the Houses of Parliament, the plans to keep the 2<sup>nd</sup> line of the Yeomanry at home seems to have been taken as early as summer 1915 with the formation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> line.<sup>39</sup> Even after the National Service Acts of 1916, those encouraged to take the ISO in the 2<sup>nd</sup> line remained rooted to home defence, serving only as far as Ireland in 1918. For those expectedly waiting to be posted overseas there was no immediate relief. One officer of the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Queen’s Own Worcestershire Hussars referred to the endless rumours circulating about their possible use, but stated, ‘we never seem to get any “forwarder”, and are always put off with honeyed words’.<sup>40</sup> Ironically for anyone wishing to remain in the United Kingdom, refusal to take the ISO after this date forced officers to resign commissions and men to take their discharge, leaving them vulnerable to conscription. Nonetheless, it is clear that others took every opportunity to volunteer as reinforcements where they could, creating some surprise amongst overseas non-Yeomanry units that received late drafts of yeomen. Two such drafts for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Welch Fusiliers – in December 1916 and January 1918 – were remarked upon due to their physical size and age. Having seen the quality of reinforcements decline rapidly and having taken a draft of mostly 18 year olds in November 1917, Captain J. C. Dunn was perplexed as to why such ‘boys’ had been sent in lieu of the

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<sup>37</sup> Last to travel were Welsh and Welsh border regiments (Cheshire, Denbighshire, and Shropshire). Also, elements of the Hampshire Carabiniers did not reach France until May 1916. James, *British Regiments 1914-1918*; and TNA, WO95/5458. Provisional Brigade War Diaries, Home Forces, 02/10/1915.

<sup>38</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 16/03/1916. Vol. 80, Para. 2420.

<sup>39</sup> For examples see: *Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, 13/07/1916 Vol. 22, Para. 712-714; and *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 13/07/1916. Vol. 84, Para. 554-555.

<sup>40</sup> HHC, UDDFA3/6/35. Letters: I. M. Windsor to Irene Forbes Adam, 11/07/1916 and 30/08/1916.

Yeomanry.<sup>41</sup> Deployed on home defence, many of these men were withheld from overseas service, some indefinitely.

Balancing domestic and foreign commitments was difficult, but Brock Millman has suggested these decisions were not based on efficiency or lack thereof.<sup>42</sup> Millman's argument runs against the understanding that this was a result of Lloyd George's interference or the fear of invasion, and instead looks to domestic insurrection. To keep this in check, the authorities maintained nineteen infantry brigades with support and service formations in the country.<sup>43</sup> Emergency Scheme K, Z, and L all exhibit the attributes of strategies designed to deal with much more than the limited invasion scenarios that high command thought possible. Furthermore, it is possible that they feared a blockade mentality might be encouraged by increased shipping losses and industrial unrest.<sup>44</sup> The Yeomanry brigades which helped prepare the East Anglian coastal defences, and those who rode out to meet the false alarms, suggests that Millman might have downplayed the belief in a raid. Nevertheless, it is clear that after being relinquished of depot responsibilities by the 3<sup>rd</sup> line, the intention was to retain the second for home service. Though it is conjecture to say this decision was made in light of the force's composition, it is hard to resist the temptation given Millman's argument and their final destination in Ireland. Willing or not, the 2<sup>nd</sup> line did not see operational theatres beyond the UK. Instead they remained at home, possibly to fulfil a role that encouraged their original inception.

Figures comparing Yeomanry recruitment for home and foreign service are hard to decipher, although home service men appear to have peaked at just over 8,300 in November 1914.<sup>45</sup> Motivations for enlistment, however, can be more tangible. It would seem that most men who joined or were posted to 2<sup>nd</sup> line Yeomanry regiments hoped to serve abroad, but there is evidence to the contrary. In December 1914, for example, it was claimed that the home service credentials of the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Staffordshire Yeomanry was attracting so many recruits that it was damaging the build up of

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<sup>41</sup> Dunn, Captain J. C. *The War the Infantry Knew, 1914-1919 – A Chronicle of Service in France and Belgium* (Abacus, London, 2003), pp. 414 & 439-440.

<sup>42</sup> Millman, B. 'British Home Defence Planning and Civil Dissent, 1917-1918' *War in History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1998, p. 208.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 218.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*. Emergency Scheme K (August 1916) kept the Yeomanry in East Anglia (p. 213). Emergency Scheme L was there to quell a worse case scenario of civil insurrection in mainland Britain, whilst Emergency Scheme Z dealt with Ireland (p. 232); and p. 221.

<sup>45</sup> ISO men stood at 39,957 at the same date. TNA, WO114/43. Returns of the Territorial Force at Home.

regiments due to go overseas.<sup>46</sup> Similar beliefs were expressed elsewhere, but were not restricted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> line. Cuthbert Headlam, for example, noted in his diary in mid-August that the regiment, 'realised that service abroad meant home defence'. Similarly, Siegfried Sassoon became restless with the Sussex Yeomanry's non-involvement stating it was, 'a recognized fact...that we were unlikely to be sent to the front in our semi-efficient condition.'<sup>47</sup> It would seem that many, quite rightly, believed their departure would be delayed. Quite how many men were motivated to join the Yeomanry because of this is unclear, but the government, concerned by absorption of fit and effective men into home service formations, attempted to control the situation. As Lord Newton explained to the House of Lords on 15 December 1915, it was deemed necessary to divert the flow of recruits into the Territorial regiments whose 1<sup>st</sup> line was overseas. To achieve this, 'on October 6 a general minimum height of 5ft. 3in. and a maximum height of 5ft. 6in. for all Yeomanry regiments was prescribed. A month following recruiting for all Yeomanry regiments whose 1<sup>st</sup> line units were not being employed dismounted on active service was stopped altogether. At the beginning of the present month [December] units whose 1<sup>st</sup> Line were employed dismounted on active service were allowed to abandon the height standard altogether.' This, however, was not the first block on Yeomanry recruiting: the same had happened between 17 June and 15 September 1915.<sup>48</sup>

Taking these restrictions as an indicator, some men lobbied hard to cross into the 1<sup>st</sup> line when it was due to travel overseas. Indeed, the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry absorbed more than 200 men from their 2<sup>nd</sup> line just as they were about to sail for Gallipoli.<sup>49</sup> Others, who did not have this early opportunity, took their chances elsewhere. Just as his regiment was losing their horses in 1916, W. J. Martin jumped at the possibility of leaving the 2<sup>nd</sup> line of the Royal 1<sup>st</sup> Devon Yeomanry for a battalion of the Devonshire infantry.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, in May 1916 the Surrey Yeomanry found a substantial draft for the East Surrey Regiment.<sup>51</sup> Though it is difficult to confirm, it is likely that these drafts were reinforcing battalions of both regiments

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<sup>46</sup> Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', p. 135.

<sup>47</sup> Beach, *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam*, p. 53; and Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*, pp. 236-237.

<sup>48</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, 15/12/1915. Vol. 20, Para. 644-645; and TNA, WO 70/50. TF Organisation and Administration, pp. 19 & 51.

<sup>49</sup> Ogilvie, *The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. YEO.) Battn. R.H. 1914-1919*, pp. 9 & 11.

<sup>50</sup> IWM, 2554 Con. Shelf. Letters: W. J. Martin to Emily Chitticks, C. October 1916 – January 1917.

<sup>51</sup> Harrison-Ainsworth, *History and war records of the Surrey (QMR) Yeomanry*, p. 282.

before their involvement in the Somme battles of the coming months. As a result of those battles, yeomen still in the UK were in further demand. For example, a draft of 450 men from the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Sussex Yeomanry went to join the 10<sup>th</sup> Queen's Regiment in September 1916. Two months later, two drafts from the 2/1<sup>st</sup> West Kent Yeomanry supplied 237 men to the Royal West Kent Regiment. Similarly, on 24 December 1916 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Welch Fusiliers received a draft of dismounted yeomen of unknown origin.<sup>52</sup> In all examples the move was greeted with enthusiasm. Shortly before the birth of the 74<sup>th</sup> Division, the parent regiments to these 2<sup>nd</sup> line units were still operating as dismounted cavalry and were not in need of the manpower. Nonetheless, this dissipation of the supporting lines did become something of a grievance to the Sussex Yeomanry, who formed the 16<sup>th</sup> Royal Sussex Regiment without amalgamating with another Yeomanry regiment. Approximately 700 men, who had volunteered to serve with the Sussex Yeomanry, helped fill the desperate battalions on the Somme shortly before the 1<sup>st</sup> line had had to double its numbers; it was unfortunate timing.<sup>53</sup> Elsewhere, where the numbers added up, 1<sup>st</sup> line regiments of brigades merged to achieve battalion establishment rather than relying on their sibling regiments in the UK. Those men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> line still left behind mostly stayed there, though the Royal Welch was glad to receive a further draft of yeomen as late as the 30 January 1918.<sup>54</sup>

Defending the British coast was a job the Yeomanry should have been trained and ready to take on. Splitting regiments into multiple 'lines' greatly expanded their size and made them a more versatile tool for a government attempting to maximise the potential of its manpower, whilst keeping an eye on all fronts. Being on home service meant that 2<sup>nd</sup> line regiments were not suffering casualties, which, in turn, meant that they had certain rights withheld from them. With recruiting restricted and the return of men from home service provisional units, transfer remained the most promising option those that were determined to see foreign service. The mounting demands of the Western Front helped many find their way to the fighting.

Despite this awkward treatment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> line, it was not difficult to find foreign service men for the first. Examples already given demonstrate how many

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<sup>52</sup> Ponsonby, *West Kent (Q.O.) Yeomanry*, p. 135; Powell Edwards, Lieutenant-Colonel H. I. *The Sussex Yeomanry and the 16<sup>th</sup> (Sussex Yeomanry) Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment, 1914-1919* (Melrose, London, 1921), Appendix B, p. 259; and Dunn, *The War the Infantry Knew*, p. 286.

<sup>53</sup> Powell Edwards, *The Sussex Yeomanry*, p. 67.

<sup>54</sup> Dunn, *The War the Infantry Knew*, pp. 439-440.

mobilised without crippling losses. In making up a deficit or maintaining numbers it seems the Yeomanry benefited from the same public enthusiasm as elsewhere. For example, Lord Hythe received four times the required number of recruits for foreign service during his recruiting drive for the West Kent Yeomanry in London in early September 1914.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, in Hampshire the Carabiniers were considerably over establishment by the same month, with an extra 253 men including those at the depot.<sup>56</sup> The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry were so swamped that they had to 'beg, borrow, or steal' clothing to give to those enlisting and re-enlisting in the regiment.<sup>57</sup> As would be the case with the rest of the Territorial Force, significant numbers of time-expired yeomen returned to their regiments on the outbreak of war and made a noticeable contribution to manpower figures.<sup>58</sup> The Staffordshire Yeomanry had so many returning members that they claimed to have been inundated.<sup>59</sup> *The Times* even suggested that a large proportion of the West Kent and 1<sup>st</sup> (Reserve) County of London recruits had seen service in South Africa with the Imperial Yeomanry.<sup>60</sup>

Such ease in recruitment should not be taken as a given for the whole force, however. For example, although 85 per cent of the Shropshire Yeomanry signed the ISO, they struggled to fill the remaining 15 per cent with, 'men of the right stamp for a Yeomanry regiment.'<sup>61</sup> Where regiments were competing for the same limited resources there were also problems. For example, the Royal 1<sup>st</sup> Devon Yeomanry recruited more than twice the number of men as the Royal North Devon Hussars over the same five month period in 1915. Though they blamed their recruiting officer, it would also seem that the targeted areas had run dry.<sup>62</sup> In another letter it was made clear to Lord Fortescue that, although immediately after harvest was the favourable time for country recruiting, there had to be a change in their procedures:

I do not believe that many more men are to be obtained in [rural areas] if agricultural work is to be called on...Our chief recruiting ground must be in the towns and I do not believe that public meetings will reach those

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<sup>55</sup> *The Times*, 02/09/1914.

<sup>56</sup> Freeman, *Historical Records of the Hampshire Carabiniers Yeomanry*, p. 223.

<sup>57</sup> Ogilvie, *The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. YEO.) Battn. R.H. 1914-1919*, p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', p. 130.

<sup>59</sup> Kemp, Lieutenant-Colonel P. K. *The Staffs. Yeomanry (QORR) in the First and Second World Wars, 1914-1918 and 1939-1945* (Gale and Polden, 1950), p. 314.

<sup>60</sup> 'Reserve' later became '2<sup>nd</sup> line'. *The Times*, 02/09/1914 and 16/01/1915.

<sup>61</sup> Gladstone, *The Shropshire Yeomanry*, p. 191.

<sup>62</sup> DRO, 1262M/O/LD/118. Copy of Letter: unknown to unknown, 02/09/1915.



whom we require; the only method is I think domiciliary visitation by those who are well known to the people we want to get at.<sup>63</sup>

In Dorset, Lieutenant-Colonel Colfox of the 2<sup>nd</sup> line suffered similar problems and noted, 'Dorsetshire is a small county and has recruited particularly well in other branches of the service. The supply of Yeomanry recruits has almost if not entirely ceased.'<sup>64</sup> Worse still, this situation was reflected in the 1<sup>st</sup> line, which led to Lieutenant-Colonel Troyte-Bullock stating that the size of the drafts made them, 'the laughing stock of Egypt!'<sup>65</sup> Major-General Peyton – commanding 2<sup>nd</sup> Mounted Division – wrote to Colfox suggesting he publish his praise of the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry if he considered it would help with recruiting. It was even suggested that 26 February and 21 August (the dates of the actions at Agagia and the Salt Lake respectively in 1915) should be anniversaries for the purpose of recruiting.<sup>66</sup> It is unclear whether this had the desired impact and, with the onset of conscription, it might be argued that it does not matter; nonetheless, the problems are clear.

Despite these difficulties, it appears that other regiments followed the Shropshire Yeomanry in attempting to attract 'desirable' men. When looking for ways around the restricted height standards, it was suggested to the Royal North Devon Hussars that they ignore it and take men of the 'right yeoman stamp'. 'Men of inferior class who are over-height', the note continued, 'transfer virtuously to other corps.' Though it was said to be 'unofficial advice', the author made it known that he would back the regiment in the event of repercussions.<sup>67</sup> Taking all these comments alongside the praise of General Sir Ian Hamilton (see below), it is clear that some regiments attempted to uphold the status of their rank and file despite a dwindling supply of the right men. Although the later examples provided in Table 3.1 (see page 116) suggest that the recruiting grounds of the Yeomanry had not changed a great deal, it is evident that such areas were suffering considerable competition from agriculture (a perennial issue for the Yeomanry) and county regiments. Had more of the force been utilised in demanding theatres earlier in the war it is unlikely that these recruiting methods could have kept pace with demand for as long as they did. As it

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<sup>63</sup> DRO, 1262M/O/LD/118. Letter: James Clinton to Lord Fortescue, 07/09/1915.

<sup>64</sup> DHC, D/DOY/A/6/5. Letter: Lieutenant-Colonel J. A. Colfox to General Bethune, 21/01/1916.

<sup>65</sup> DHC, D/DOY/A/6/5. Letter: E. C. Troyte-Bullock to R. C. Bately, 17/04/1916.

<sup>66</sup> DHC, D/DOY/A/6/5. Letter Major-General Peyton to Lieutenant-Colonel Colfox, C. late 1915.

<sup>67</sup> DRO, 1262M/O/LD/118. Letter: Unknown to Mr. Carratt, 23/11/1915.

was, many did not suffer crippling casualties before they arrived in France as elements of the 74<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

Although regiments had always preferred a certain class of man, occupational backgrounds were never set in stone, especially amongst the Boer War regiments. Testimony to the presence of these regiments in urban society, personal experiences of the outbreak of war also hint at the attraction to those outside of the rural community. John Fell joined the Surrey Yeomanry after serving as a cadet with the same regiment. Although the regiment is said to have had no official connections with his school in Croydon, its popularity amongst his peers in the London fringes suggests it was well established in the area.<sup>68</sup> Fred Dixon had been a member of a cadet battalion of the Church Lads Brigade affiliated with the King's Royal Rifle Corps, but he broke from this infantry background to join the Surrey Yeomanry in October 1914, despite never having ridden a horse. This was explained by his memories of seeing 'Cubitt's Robins' – a combination of the old lieutenant-colonel's surname and the regiments red facings – march through Dorking to their annual camp. These memories proved sufficiently powerful to encourage him to attest with the Surrey Yeomanry over the KRRC or other competitors. Believing the conflict would last longer than others assumed, he decided to choose his regiment rather than be conscripted into a less desirable unit.<sup>69</sup>

In a similar case, C. H. David joined the Glamorgan Yeomanry after being impressed by the Ayrshire Yeomanry when he was at Ayr Academy.<sup>70</sup> As had been continuously argued, uniform was important for recruiting and attracted a different sort of individual. Frederick Winterbotham had served with the Charterhouse Officer Training Corps. From a wealthy family, he was attracted to the Yeomanry by his love of horses and he became a subaltern shortly after the outbreak of war. He enjoyed training 100 'butchers and grocers' to ride in a 2<sup>nd</sup> line regiment of the Gloucestershire Hussars, but left for Royal Flying Corps when the regiment was converted to cyclists. His desire to join the Yeomanry stemmed from the specific attractions of the force, which might be the only locally raised mounted arm in a district.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> IWM Sound Archive (9151). John James Percy Fell, Tape 1. Recorded 1985.

<sup>69</sup> IWM Sound Archive (737). Fred Dixon, Tapes 1 and 2. Recording date unknown.

<sup>70</sup> IWM, 87/4/1. Reminiscences of Colonel C. H. David.

<sup>71</sup> IWM Sound Archive (7462). Frederick William Winterbotham. Recorded 1984.

In a way similar to that expressed during the second Boer War, there are also examples of expatriate Britons returning to the United Kingdom to join the war effort. Indeed, records of soldiers killed in the Great War show contributions from North and South America, Canada, the Caribbean, the antipodes, India, and Africa.<sup>72</sup> Despite suggesting that mounted soldiers were superfluous to requirement and that, 'at best Yeomanry service gave little satisfaction', Arthur Whitehouse had returned from the United States and joined the Northamptonshire Yeomanry. Although it is difficult to determine whether this regiment had dominated the local volunteering efforts, again it is clear that their recruiting machinery was an effective collector of manpower.<sup>73</sup> Both the Gloucestershire Hussars and the Northamptonshire Yeomanry had the bragging rights of mounted service, something that must have attracted avid riders. Others, however, were driven by less loyal or romantic ideals. Raymond Coxon – destined to be an official war artist during the Second World War – originally presented himself to the Artists' Rifles, but was turned away on account of his educational background. He and a friend then chose the Staffordshire Yeomanry as they were operating in Eastern theatres and his accomplice wanted to visit Jerusalem. Describing himself as 'not terribly loyal', Coxon is one of many who cared little for a regiment's local character or standing and was driven by events and the choice of operational theatre.<sup>74</sup>

Although the foreign service elements of Yeomanry regiments swelled on the outbreak of war, the Northumberland Hussars was the only pre-war Imperial Service regiment. George Jameson was given the chance to join the Elswick Battery when he joined Armstrong Whitworth and during his three years there was taught to ride.<sup>75</sup> He joined the Yeomanry twelve months before the outbreak of war and, though his motivations are not clear, his knowledge of horses and the Imperial Service badge of the Northumberland Hussars presumably influenced his decision. At the same time, there were those who were left with little option as to who they served with. As the war progressed the regimental system in general suffered considerable breakdown, and the Yeomanry was no exception. By 1917 there were complaints from regiments in the Sinai that Yeomanry reinforcements were being forwarded from Egypt in drafts of 500 and distributed where they were needed.<sup>76</sup> However, unlike the majority of

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<sup>72</sup> *Soldiers Died in the Great War*.

<sup>73</sup> IWM Sound Archive (7036). Arthur G. J. Whitehouse. Recording date unknown.

<sup>74</sup> IWM Sound Archive (990). Raymond James Coxon. Recording date unknown.

<sup>75</sup> IWM Sound Archive (7363). George Brumwell Jameson. Recorded 1984.

<sup>76</sup> CBS, TA/3/517. Letter: E. F. Lawson to 'Uncle Harry', 24/07/17.

infantry regiments on the Western Front, the Yeomanry of the 1<sup>st</sup> line rarely had the need for rapid reinforcement. With few exceptions, those campaigns that occupied the Yeomanry prior to 1917 were incomparable in terms of casualties to those undertaken on the Western Front. Due to this disparity, it is clear that many of the recruits raised and trained by the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> line of the Yeomanry actually ended up elsewhere. Many, like Private Tickle of the West Kent Yeomanry, found themselves attached to a different county's infantry regiment.<sup>77</sup> Other experiences were even more disjointed. In February 1917, A. J. Jamieson had wanted to join the Scots Fusiliers, but on entering the recruiting centre in the Glasgow Tramways Office had been told that only the Yeomanry was recruiting. Choosing to join the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Ayrshire Yeomanry as his friend did the same, he left Scotland in February 1918 in a draft of 50 men to join the 11<sup>th</sup> Royal Scots in France.<sup>78</sup>

Motivations varied a great deal and the final destination of some was more the decision of the recruiting personnel than the individual. Nonetheless, it is clear that the Yeomanry machinery performed relatively well in many respects and certainly seems to have continued as an effective recruiting facility before these duties were taken out of their hands. While the 3<sup>rd</sup> line of most regiments was in existence it seems to have played a large part in maintaining the first; indeed, the West Kent Yeomanry sent out six drafts of new recruits and returning injured and furlough men between January 1916 and the following year, whilst Sussex would see 1,550 pass through into the other lines during the war.<sup>79</sup> Although the wider war siphoned men from these units, regiments appear to have remained linked to their county and recruiting areas.

Undoubtedly connected to the troubled conscience of yeomen serving in comparatively idle service, a large number of other ranks sought commissions and transfers from the Yeomanry. Dissatisfaction was rife amongst many in the first and 2<sup>nd</sup> line at home, in North Africa, and the Middle East, and a fine example can be found amongst those caught up in the Senussi campaign that stretched into late 1917 (see page 249). Nonetheless, operations of this sort were not the only way of locking up potential and wasting manpower. The confused training regimes combined with Canal defence – though essential in view of Ottoman intentions – tied men to what

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<sup>77</sup> Tickle joined the 3/1 West Kent Yeomanry in early 1916 and was drafted to the 18<sup>th</sup> Middlesex Regiment in August. IWM, 88/65/1. Papers of Pte. E. Tickle 'My Life as a Soldier'.

<sup>78</sup> IWM, 88/52/1. Papers of A. J. Jamieson.

<sup>79</sup> Ponsoy, *West Kent (Q.O.) Yeomanry*, p. 137; and Powell Edwards, *The Sussex Yeomanry*, p. 263.

they saw as menial, second-rate tasks which were put into perspective by news from Europe. Many who enthusiastically volunteered on the outbreak of war could not stomach the thought of seeing through the conflict in these circumstances. For pre-war yeomen this created a clash of interests between regiment and duty; as Lieutenant Thorpe of the East Kent Yeomanry concluded, 'it must seem very unfair to those in France going through such awful experiences knowing there are others doing comparatively nothing...In the minds of us all we realise we have an unfair advantage over the troops on the Western Front.'<sup>80</sup>

Bearing in mind the credentials of many yeomen, severing ties cannot have been an easy decision. In 1913 34 per cent of Yeomanry other ranks had four or more year's service and 9 per cent more than ten.<sup>81</sup> Nonetheless, ties were not unbreakable. Early in March 1915 officers of the Bedfordshire Yeomanry were offered captaincies and majorities in one of the county infantry battalions. The infantry were 'badly off for officers - or rather [were] about to go off with bad officers.' The 'tempters' of the infantry said that the War Office had decided to reserve the Yeomanry for home defence and this combined with instant promotion must have been a strong influence. Shortly after another promise for foreign service fell through in April 1915, the regiment lost its ninth officer to a transfer since mobilising.<sup>82</sup> By the end of the same year there were also inducements for Yeomanry officers to transfer to services in greater demand. On 22 December 1915 Sir John Jardine asked Harold Tennant (Under-Secretary of State) whether lieutenants and captains in the Yeomanry were offered promotion if they transferred to the Artillery or Infantry. He received the answer that, 'steps [had] been taken to ascertain whether any Cavalry officers are desirous of promotion into Artillery and Infantry units, and each case is being considered on its merits'.<sup>83</sup>

Later in the war, sedate service in Egypt was also enough to encourage some officers to transfer to more active theatres. Captain I. B. Jarmay of the Earl of Chester's Yeomanry, for example, left as late as 1916.<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, more senior officers found themselves promoted and seconded to commands. Such was the case for Major Phillips-Brocklehurst of the same regiment, and Major Noel of the

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<sup>80</sup> CKS, EKY/Z11. Diary Lieutenant F. R. Thorpe, p. 122.

<sup>81</sup> BPP: Cd. 7252, 1914: *General Annual Reports on the British Army*, 1913.

<sup>82</sup> Beach, *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam*, pp. 68 & 70.

<sup>83</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 22/12/1915. Vol. 77, Para. 459.

<sup>84</sup> Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry*, pp. 81 & 78; and Powell Edwards, *The Sussex Yeomanry*, p. 19.

Shropshire Yeomanry who were both promoted to lieutenant-colonelcies, the former in the 9<sup>th</sup> Cheshire Regiment, the latter in the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Royal West Kent Regiment.<sup>85</sup> Though there might have been a dearth of suitable senior officers for commands, it should not be overlooked that active opportunities were also sought by officers who felt they could give more.

The possibilities for promotion from the rank and file were also promising. For example, the Shropshire Yeomanry found that many of their other ranks exhibited an instinct for leadership early in the war.<sup>86</sup> Through the last part of 1914 and before leaving the UK, the Sussex Yeomanry saw a steady stream of men leave to take commissions amongst the first of the 'New Armies'.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, though many of the West Kent Yeomanry had wished to 'see it out with the old regiment', the attraction of promotion and active service was stronger. As a result, 'the trickle [of commissions] became a torrent'.<sup>88</sup> Writing immediately after the war, the author of the West Kent's regimental history stated that the typical yeoman was naturally imbued with the relevant qualities, being of the right, 'age, intelligence, education, and physique', to take a commission. This observation is somewhat justified by the figures. During the war the 1<sup>st</sup> line of the West and East Kent Yeomanry produced 248 officers, whilst the 2<sup>nd</sup> line of the former put forward over 100. The Sussex Yeomanry lost 216 men to commissions, the Glamorganshire Yeomanry over 200, the 2/1 Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars 67, and the Northamptonshire Yeomanry 136 from all lines. Perhaps most telling of all, King Edward's Horse saw a startling 550 of their men commissioned during the war, with apprenticeship in the ranks supposedly accepted, 'as a sufficient diploma by even the most exacting commanding officer'.<sup>89</sup> By comparison, the socially exclusive 5<sup>th</sup> (London Rifle Brigade) London Regiment commissioned 708 men between 1914 and 1916. However, the same regiment suffered 844 deaths in the same period and received drafts amounting to 1,234 men between July and October 1916. Suffering such high wastage and turnover in a more

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<sup>85</sup> Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry*, p. 78; and Gladstone, *The Shropshire Yeomanry*, p. 211.

<sup>86</sup> Gladstone, *The Shropshire Yeomanry*, pp. 191-192.

<sup>87</sup> Powell Edwards, *The Sussex Yeomanry*, p. 19.

<sup>88</sup> Ponsonby, *West Kent (Q.O.) Yeomanry*, p. 35.

<sup>89</sup> Compiled from the particulars of service. Ponsonby, *West Kent (Q.O.) Yeomanry*, pp. 142-205; Powell Edwards, *The Sussex Yeomanry*, pp. 264-391; Owen, *Glamorgan - Its Gentlemen & Yeomanry*, p. 62; Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', p. 146; NRO, NY 2/1. Scrapbook, Colonel Lord Annaly; and James, Lieutenant-Colonel L. *The History of King Edward's Horse* (Sifton, Pread, London, 1921), p. 19.

active theatre makes comparison difficult, but proportionately the Yeomanry's officer output remains impressive.<sup>90</sup> If the Yeomanry was not always playing the most active part in the war effort, it seems to have provided a reservoir of officer candidates to all arms of the British army.

The regular cavalry was an obvious destination for many new officers and on 13 July 1916 Lord Lamington asked in the House of Lords why officer cadets had been sent to fill cavalry regiments when so many 2<sup>nd</sup> line Yeomanry officers were vetoed.<sup>91</sup> The answer stated that their loss to the 2<sup>nd</sup> line would lead to immediate inefficiency in the ranks, but this says little about candidates from regiments overseas. Of the 159 commissions in the Sussex Yeomanry where a destination is identified, 26 per cent went to the infantry; 24 per cent to Yeomanry regiments; 13 per cent the Royal Field Artillery; 12 per cent went to OTCs; eight per cent went to a flying arm; three per cent to the regular cavalry; and the remainder went to other corps. Of the 224 identifiable men of the Kent regiments, 38 per cent went to the RFA; 24 per cent to the infantry; 20 to the flying arms; 3 to the regular cavalry; 3 to the Yeomanry; and the remainder to other corps. Although another 81 men received commissions in these three regiments, it is unclear which arm they served with. The trends, nonetheless, clearly show where demand lay.

Of course, those who left regiments for commissions did not always know where they would end up. However, with the expansion of the artillery and continuous casualties in the infantry, both were strong candidates. Despite this, one East Kent yeoman believed men were attracted to the Army Service Corps as well as the Flying Corps; the former because of the use of horses and the latter because it involved a month as an observing officer and, if suitable, a trip home to a flying school.<sup>92</sup> It would seem that most of those gazetted were happy to pursue a more active role in whichever arm they were needed. That this often took them to the infantry or artillery does not seem to have been a problem as many understood that the dismounted structure of the Yeomanry was an operational cul-de-sac; the remodelling as infantry was a question of when and not if. As a result, it is clear that the authorities were happy to treat the other ranks of the Yeomanry as a pool of potential officers. Whether men joined with this in mind is hard to say, but it is clear that a number of

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<sup>90</sup> *Soldiers Died in the Great War*; and Anon, *Short History of the London Rifle Brigade* (Gale & Polden, Aldershot, 1916), p. 46.

<sup>91</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, 13/07/1916. Vol. 22, Para. 711-2.

<sup>92</sup> CKS, EKY/Z11. Diary Lieutenant F. R. Thorpe, pp. 35 & 41.

regiments tried to keep their rank and file socially exclusive. The combination of good material and a quiet front created ample opportunities to transfer and seek promotion.

Despite the exoduses from the Yeomanry's ranks for commissions and reinforcements, it does not seem to have damaged the regiments themselves. An analysis of soldiers' details shows that just over 60 per cent of the 3,484 men killed in the Yeomanry between 1914 and 1918 had been born in their regiment's county or recruiting area, and almost 67 per cent resided there. Adding to this the fact that more than 80 per cent of these men were enlisted by county machinery suggests that, despite the interjection of Kitchener and the National Service Acts, the system maintained links with its recruiting areas and did not collapse.<sup>93</sup> Although voluntary enlistment into the Territorial Force came to an end in December 1915, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> lines never had unfeasible demands made upon them.<sup>94</sup> Whilst these figures provide an overview of the whole Yeomanry up until 1918, it must be noted that the Yeomanry regiments that were absorbed or became infantry and Machine Gun battalions from early 1917 suffered nearly 6,000 deaths before the end of the war. Equating to a 66 per cent increase in casualties compared to the whole arm in the previous three years, this understandably created a different situation.<sup>95</sup> Taking the 74<sup>th</sup> Division as an example, territorial connections did begin to breakdown. From the formation of the division in March 1917 only 60 per cent of those killed were associated with the recruiting areas of its regiments, although a fairly large number had been cross-posted from a multitude of other corps, presumably after returning from injury. In the vast majority of cases it is clear that the former yeomen of these battalions (usually identifiable by their Yeomanry number in an additional note) were local to the regiment; nonetheless, those that made up the remainder came from a wider intake. Cross-posting was far from extraordinary for those on the Western Front, and during the same month as the formation of the 74<sup>th</sup> Division, the Essex Yeomanry received a mixed draft of 109 returning injured men originally from the 5th Dragoon Guards, Derbyshire Yeomanry, Hampshire Carabiners, Nottinghamshire

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<sup>93</sup> Some of the 3,484 are excluded from calculations where information was not available. *Soldiers Died in the Great War*.

<sup>94</sup> Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', p. 139.

<sup>95</sup> 5,803 deaths. The figure is approximate because some battalions were not new, but absorbed yeomen. Some of the strength was then not from the Yeomanry. Others, like the 17<sup>th</sup> R. Scots, absorbed a squadron ('B' Lothians and Border Horse) and the Yeomanry were a minority. They are not included. *Soldiers Died in the Great War* and James, *British Regiments 1914-1918*.



Yeomanry, and West Somersetshire Yeomanry.<sup>96</sup> Though they were predominantly yeomen, this diluted the Territorial character of the unit in question.

Dilution was not true for all regiments. The Shropshire and Earl of Chester's Yeomanry regiments continued to receive more than 67 per cent of their manpower from their home districts through 1917 and 1918. Nonetheless, it is clear that others became dependant on new sources of men. For example, the Upper-ward of Lanarkshire and Ayrshire Yeomanry battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers, became heavily reliant on Glasgow for its later manpower. Similarly, the Denbighshire Yeomanry Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, took a large number of men from Liverpool and 60 per cent of its manpower from outside its recruiting areas. Although nearly 90 per cent of the pre-infantry Denbighshire yeomen killed had ties to the county, very little came from its recruiting area late in the war, perhaps because the authorities lost control of territorial distinctions.<sup>97</sup> This would reflect the wider experience of the Territorial Force, where these distinctions were sacrificed to keep up battalion strength. Taking an average of Beckett's infantry examples over 1917 to 1918, it can be seen that just over 40 per cent of men were connected to the counties associated with their battalions. As a result it might be said that the Yeomanry performed marginally better in maintaining its territorial character; this, however, was more through luck than judgement.<sup>98</sup> As the Essex experience shows, had casualties been consistently high it is likely that they would have reflected the wider Territorial experience.

It is clear that the infantry and cavalry that served in France and Flanders during the earlier episodes of the war suffered a more violent and prolonged conflict than those in the East. It would of course be an injustice to compare casualty figures given the sacrifices that the Yeomanry made in those theatres and in the last year of war. Nonetheless, these figures highlight the resilience of Yeomanry character as a product of limited casualties. As their fortunes declined, so too did their regional distinction. To help understand these changing fortunes it is important to comprehend the details of their services during the war.

There was no standard experience for the Yeomanry. Whilst some regiments saw four years of mounted service, others were split into squadrons, and a large number were dismounted. Just like the Territorial infantry, there was doubt about the

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<sup>96</sup> TNA, WO 95/1156. Essex Yeomanry War Diary, 30/04/1917.

<sup>97</sup> *Soldiers Died in the Great War*. See Appendix 4 for the composition of the 74<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

<sup>98</sup> Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', p. 147.

abilities of the Yeomanry and many debated the need for more cavalry as the war stagnated. *The Times* gave its opinion early in 1915 when it stated, 'unless our yeomanry come out on foot and fight as riflemen they will be difficult to place'; nonetheless, it was another year before the 1<sup>st</sup> line was wholly committed, and this advice was not properly embraced until 1917.<sup>99</sup> Training after mobilisation was muddled and few regiments prepared properly as they knew little of what might be asked of them. This confusion, however, was nothing new. The role of the cavalry after the South African War was plagued by bitter debate within and outside the army, largely fuelled by rivalled interpretations of that war. The Yeomanry had been caught up in the debate because of the poor performance of some of the Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa, and this had spawned the already mentioned Harris Committee of January 1901. Formed largely of Yeomanry officers – there also being one regular cavalry officer present – there were still points of contention that gave rise to a number of minority reports. Amongst these was the name and armament of the force. Colonel Sir J. Dickson-Poynder (Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry) and Colonel the Earl Dundonald (the regular cavalryman) pushed for the removal of 'cavalry' from the Yeomanry's title as well as the complete removal of all secondary armaments. Essentially, they proposed for the Yeomanry to be nothing more than Mounted Rifles, without pretensions to any kind of mounted action.<sup>100</sup> This was effectively what the force received – after Field Marshal Earl Roberts pressed St John Brodrick to accept Dundonald's suggestion – although with the introduction of the SMLE in 1903 they also received a much hated bayonet.<sup>101</sup>

As a proponent of the Mounted Infantry, Major-General Robert Baden-Powell was also adamant that the Yeomanry should be trained in the art of Mounted Rifles and not as cavalry or Mounted Infantry.<sup>102</sup> In 1905 he concluded that the *arme blanche* required too much skill for an auxiliary force with limited annual instruction, and Mounted Infantry required a larger establishment; as Mounted Rifles they would perform the duties of cavalry, though never fight on horseback. Although these edicts were passed down to the Yeomanry, the officers of three regiments – Royal Gloucestershire Hussars, Middlesex Hussars, and Montgomeryshire Yeomanry – petitioned the King to allow them to carry swords on parade. The following year all

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<sup>99</sup> *The Times*, 28/01/1915.

<sup>100</sup> Harris Committee, 1901, pp. 13-16.

<sup>101</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, pp. 161-162.

<sup>102</sup> Baden-Powell was Inspector General of Cavalry between 1903 and 1907. TNA, WO 32/8865.

but one of the 35 commanding officers would direct the same pressure towards the army council. As Badsey has shown, the sword became a symbol of the Yeomanry's opposition to their treatment by the War Office, and in one extreme case led to a regiment – the South Nottinghamshire Hussars – refusing to carry the rifle and equipping themselves entirely with lances. The flaunting of the rules was often less inflammatory than in Nottinghamshire, but F. S. Maxted of the Royal East Kent Mounted Rifles performed part of a sword demonstration in 1909 suggesting that it was still very much considered part of their image. Furthermore, district inspectors and regimental adjutants came predominantly from the regular cavalry and tended to be at odds with the line of argument pushed by the Inspector-General of Cavalry.<sup>103</sup>

The force eventually got rid of the much loathed bayonet in 1908 and was once more – at least in name – to be known as cavalry after Haldane's reforms. In addition, in 1912 the CIGS, General Sir John French, convinced the Army Council to accept and acknowledge that the Yeomanry would not all surrender their swords, despite the continued work of Roberts and the Marquess of Tullibardine.<sup>104</sup> Though the government would not pay for their swords in peacetime, they would, after this interjection, be issued on mobilisation and be allowed to perform the sword exercise before hand if they wished.<sup>105</sup> For many Yeomanry regiments this odd state would not be a concern after the outbreak of war as they were to fight on foot, though this did not stop the Fife and Forfars being handed swords as they dismounted for service in Gallipoli.<sup>106</sup> Nonetheless, regiments had been given no organised or formal direction in pre-war training and, for some, such as the Northamptonshire Yeomanry, this caused significant concern. Clearly not having provided the regiment with swords privately in peacetime, they received them less than a month before their departure to an active war zone; unsurprisingly, this made their last minute training all the more pressing.<sup>107</sup>

Finding a combat role to match their training was not the only problem facing the Yeomanry. Analysing the Bedfordshire Yeomanry after the November 1914

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<sup>103</sup> CCA, CC-W/13/3. Diary: F. S. Maxted, 1902-1920, 10/03/1909; and Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, p. 163.

<sup>104</sup> See for example: 1971-01-23/7101/23-224. Letters between Field Marshal Earl Roberts and the Marquess of Tullibardine concerning the armament of the Yeomanry, 12/07/1913-22/09/1913.

<sup>105</sup> Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, pp. 208 & 231.

<sup>106</sup> Ogilvie, *The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. YEO.) Battn. R.H. 1914-1919*, p. 8.

<sup>107</sup> Swords received 13/10/1914, landed at Harve between 04 and 11/11/1914. NRO, NY 2/4. Scrapbook/diary of Frederick Willis Lee.

invasion scare, the pessimistic Cuthbert Headlam stated, 'one always thought that in a couple of months one's gallant "yeoboys" with their wits and their education would be a match for the Regulars! How wrong one was - a perfect soldier requires years of training - and even then would be nowhere without really first class trained instructors.'<sup>108</sup> Although shipped to France in June 1915, the Bedfordshire Yeomanry still had not performed a single regimental scheme or seen an infantry soldier or gun by late January. Worse still, Headlam believed they still knew nothing of the duties of divisional cavalry.<sup>109</sup> In the interest of balance it should be noted that the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry used their time on the same coastal defences productively. They practised trench schemes that proved invaluable later on, a branch of knowledge apparently lacking in the vast majority of regiments. Furthermore, they trained more machine gun teams than the standard establishment and subsequently took six instead of three guns abroad.<sup>110</sup> Those, like the Fife and Forfars, who were dismounted probably had less to learn than their sword-wielding, mounted counterparts, but they did not become infantry before 1917. As 'dismounted cavalry' their doctrine was the same as Mounted Rifles, only without their horses. Unlike mounted infantrymen, they were trained and organised to perform all the duties of cavalry – outposts, reconnoitring, and patrolling – but not mounted offensive or defensive action. Without horses or retraining, restructuring, and new equipment, it was difficult to fully utilise their manpower in the firing line. Although the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry claimed that their machine guns balanced this discrepancy in Gallipoli, for most dismounted regiments this issue was a perennial problem until the spring of 1917.

An operational narrative should probably start with Egypt and Gallipoli, but it is worth analysing first the peculiarities of regiments in France operating as cavalry. For many this was not to be a simple transfer to active service. For Cuthbert Headlam, 'it [was] so typical of our English methods that for all these months we should have trained ourselves as mounted infantry and then at the last moment to be told that we are going to be put into a Cavalry Brigade'. The experience and surprise was much the same in the Northamptonshire Yeomanry, though their responsibilities only

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<sup>108</sup> His emphasis. Beach, *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam*, pp. 62 & 65.

<sup>109</sup> Beach, *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam*, p. 66; and James, *British Regiments 1914-1918*.

<sup>110</sup> Ogilvie, *The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. YEO.) Battn. R.H. 1914-1919*, p. 8.

stretched to divisional and later corps cavalry duties.<sup>111</sup> Although the Hertfordshire Yeomanry and Westminster Dragoons were amongst the first Territorial troops to leave the United Kingdom, those Yeomanry regiments bound for the Western Front were the first to enter an active theatre and, in the case of the Oxfordshire Hussars, the third Territorial unit in France.<sup>112</sup> During the course of the war, 19 regiments saw mounted service in France and Flanders performing a variety of tasks, very few of them, however, reflected their training.

For the divisional and corps cavalry these tasks were not always glamorous or exciting. Arthur Whitehouse of the Northamptonshire Yeomanry found there was not much call for his regiment beyond escorts and guards and found more use for his machine gun training alongside the infantry and later the Royal Flying Corps.<sup>113</sup> Frederick Willis Lee of the same regiment found himself trench digging, acting as a stretcher bearer, burying dead livestock, rounding up deserters, and working at the divisional HQ. At this latter destination Lee found his time was 'spent very idly', something that led him also to transfer to the RFC.<sup>114</sup> Others, like the Hampshire Carabiners, carried out anti-aircraft duties and performed essential yet thankless tasks such as burying telephone cables.<sup>115</sup> The war diaries of 'B' and 'D' squadron of the Westmoreland and Cumberland Yeomanry tell a similar story of road control duties and supporting the Assistant Provost Marshal.<sup>116</sup> Although it lacked the dash of the cavalry brigades, these divisional duties were very important to the functioning of the British army in France and Flanders. At the same time, it should not be assumed that the divisional cavalry avoided the sharp end of war entirely. For example, the Westmoreland and Cumberland Yeomanry also supported the 44<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade on foot during the Battle of Loos in September 1915. During the Battle of Messines in 1917, the Hampshire Carabiners followed the infantry attack on 7 June and started bridging the British trenches and forming a road through the wreckage. They later

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<sup>111</sup> Beach, *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam*, p. 70; and NRO, NY 2/1. Scrapbook, Colonel Lord Annaly.

<sup>112</sup> Hertfordshire Yeomanry and Westminster Dragoons sailed for Egypt on 10/09/1914 alongside 42<sup>nd</sup> (East Lancs.) Division. Oxfordshire Hussars departed 22/09, closely followed by the Northumberland Hussars in October. The first infantry were the London Scottish (14/09) and the Honourable Artillery's infantry (18/09). The Leicestershire, North Somerset, and Northampton Yeomanries followed in November. TNA, WO 158/931. Schedule of Territorial Force Troops Embarked for the Continent and Replacement Units – 11/1914; and James, *British Regiments 1914-1918*.

<sup>113</sup> IWM Sound Archive (7036). Arthur G. J. Whitehouse. Recording date unknown.

<sup>114</sup> NRO, NY 2/4. Scrapbook/Diary of Frederick Willis Lee. 01/1915-06/1915.

<sup>115</sup> Freeman, *Historical Records of the Hampshire Carabiniers Yeomanry*, p.239.

<sup>116</sup> TNA, WO 95/2105. 26-28/09/15, 'B' Squadron WO 95/1923 and 15/12/15, 'D' squadron.

reconnoitred through the forward line to locate the enemy's new positions until their defence was, 'too well organised to admit any other cavalry action in advance of the infantry line'. For their contribution they were thanked by 33<sup>rd</sup> Brigade.<sup>117</sup> Despite this latter example, however, few of the *fighting* experiences of the Yeomanry divisional cavalry were on horseback. Furthermore, to the great disappointment of the Hampshire Carabiners, Yorkshire Hussars, Westmoreland and Cumberland Yeomanry, and South Irish Horse, an order on 13 August 1917 saw them dismounted to complete infantry training.<sup>118</sup>

Those Yeomanry regiments in the Cavalry brigades did not miss out on the infantry experience either and, as Major Fleming of the Oxfordshire Hussars noted, dismounting to the relative safety of the trenches could be a pleasure.<sup>119</sup> Stanley Down of the North Somerset Yeomanry recalled regularly leaving horses behind the line to occupy the trenches around Ypres.<sup>120</sup> Doing time in the trenches was far from an odd experience and also included support for offensive action, often in the form of small operations or trench raids. Early in May 1915 the Essex Yeomanry were holding the advanced trenches at Brielen – just outside Ypres – at regimental strength, and took part in a dismounted attack to reclaim a forward position with the rest of 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade.<sup>121</sup> Quite distinct from most Yeomanry regiments, 13 detachments of dismounted Lovat Scouts provided observation posts and snipers. From 1916, on application to the Corps Intelligence Office, a divisional commander could attach scouts to observe part of the line or reconnoitre a section before a raid.<sup>122</sup> The North and South Irish Horse seem to have provided similar sniping detachments.<sup>123</sup> The Yeomanry's dismounted support also stretched to far larger engagements. Walter Becklade – serving with the Yeomanry in 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade – found himself fighting dismounted alongside infantry at Neuve Chapelle in March 1915.<sup>124</sup> During the Battle of Loos in September of the same year, whilst waiting to support operations

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<sup>117</sup> *Historical Records of the Hampshire Carabiniers Yeomanry*, pp. 237-238.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>119</sup> Fleming commanded 'C' Squadron. IWM, 90/28/1, Papers of Major V. Fleming. Letter: Fleming to Randolph, 06/12/14. His emphasis.

<sup>120</sup> IWM Sound Archive (4083). Stanley F. Down. Recorded 1977.

<sup>121</sup> TNA, WO 95/1156. Essex Yeomanry War Diary, 13/5/15.

<sup>122</sup> Prichard, Major H. V. H. *Sniping in France, 1914-1918: with Notes on Scientific Training of Scouts, Observers, and Snipers* (Hutchinson, London, 1920), p. 74.

<sup>123</sup> TNA, WO 95/2445 ('E' Sqn. North Irish Horse) 27/03/1916; and WO 95/623 ('HQ', 'A', & 'B' Sqn. South Irish Horse) 01/01/1917.

<sup>124</sup> Becklade served with either the Leicestershire or Essex Yeomanry. IWM Sound Archive, (4016). Walter Becklade. Recording date unknown.

from the saddle, the Essex Yeomanry hastily dismounted to occupy part of the captured German trench system.<sup>125</sup>

Apart from supplying specialists and dismounted support in times of crisis, a number of regiments did also take the fight to the enemy on horseback. Perhaps the most infamous of all these operations took place at Monchy-les-Preux by 8<sup>th</sup> Mounted Brigade during the 1917 Arras offensive. On 11 April elements of the brigade attempted to force the front that had stalled in the town. Though they were successful in securing the position, they did not reach their objectives or reintroduce momentum into the assault. Still worse, in the process of achieving these ends they suffered what one trooper described as a massacre, losing their brigadier, his staff, and a crippling number of 'led' horses who had nowhere to hide from strafing aircraft and artillery.<sup>126</sup> This is the kind of narrative that Badsey objects to in his analysis of British cavalry doctrine, perpetuating as it does the idea of the vulnerability of horsemen and the failure of the cavalry to adapt.<sup>127</sup> In defence of the cavalry at Monchy, David Kenyon concluded that, although 8<sup>th</sup> Mounted Brigade was slowly decimated once it decided to hold the town, it performed this duty admirably with clever use of its machine guns.<sup>128</sup> There is little reason to doubt the abilities of the men involved or the muted success of their own operation: it is probable that any counter-attack would have shattered the original attacking force of the 37<sup>th</sup> Division if left unsupported. Furthermore, the conduct of the operation was far removed from the vision of knee-to-knee charges established in the minds of cavalry critics. Nonetheless, it is hard to ignore the sacrifice in manpower and horseflesh for a town that was not a natural cavalry objective and did not suffer a determined counter-attack. The Yeomanry had performed the tasks asked of them and the cavalry had shown itself to be adaptable. Even so, whatever is said by their champions, their horses were vulnerable and awkward as soon as they dismounted and the Essex Yeomanry did not receive remounts until the end of the month.<sup>129</sup> The limited offensive nature of the cavalry in examples like this undermines the defence of Badsey and Kenyon and it might be asked if infantry might have offered support without the same losses.

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<sup>125</sup> TNA, WO 95/1156. Essex Yeomanry War Diary, 26/09/1915.

<sup>126</sup> The 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade contained the Essex and Leicestershire Yeomanry. The former were in the lead elements of this attack. TNA, WO 95/1156. Essex Yeomanry War Diary, 11/04/1917; and NRO, NY3/2. 'Memoirs of a Yeoman, 1911-1918'. MS.

<sup>127</sup> Badsey, S. *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry*, pp. 306-307.

<sup>128</sup> Kenyon, D. 'British Cavalry on the Western Front,' pp. 136-139.

<sup>129</sup> TNA, WO 95/1156. Essex Yeomanry War Diary, 23-29/04/1917.

One final and short lived anomaly of Yeomanry service on the Western Front was the conversion of four regiments – those of the cavalry brigades: the Bedfordshire Yeomanry, Essex Yeomanry, Leicestershire Yeomanry, and North Somerset Yeomanry – to machine gun battalions in 1918. Converting shortly before the German spring offensive in an attempt to make better use of their manpower, they suddenly found themselves in demand on horseback. With mobility briefly restored by the turning of the British flanks, cavalry were needed to cover the retreat. This was nearly found to the cost of the 20<sup>th</sup> (Light) and 36<sup>th</sup> (Ulster) Divisions who only managed to extricate themselves from Eaucourt and Cugny thanks to a squadron charge of the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade. Haig was keen to point out the importance of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Divisions during these operations and considered the need for mounted men to be so urgent, ‘that arrangements were made during the progress of the battle to provide with horses several regiments of Yeomanry who had but recently been dismounted for employment with other arms’. In this turmoil the cavalry played a part in holding the thin line before the arrival of French reinforcements, though it was unable to put an end to the retreat. Having been commended by Haig alongside the regular cavalry, it also provided a well timed demand on the mounted arm and maintained these regiments as cavalry until the end of the war.<sup>130</sup>

Experiences of the Western Front were relatively similar, although the tasks involved were broad. Where the Yeomanry worked with cavalry it performed no worse than its professional brethren. Major Fleming of the Queen’s Own Oxfordshire Hussars was adamant about this when he noted that the regular cavalry were, ‘not so bloody much better than a good yeoboy regiment’.<sup>131</sup> Duties were more varied and fluid here and even those regiments that retained their cavalry stamp had plenty of experience in the trenches. In fact, like much of the regular cavalry, it is clear that the Yeomanry’s time was rarely spent idly waiting. They regularly performed essential rear-area tasks and on numerous occasions acted as a useful mobile reserve and support for the infantry in pressing times; there can be little doubt that the Yeomanry was part of a valuable and flexible force in this respect. Nonetheless, given the number of regular cavalry in the theatre it might well be asked if they were surplus to requirements in the same role. The answer to this question is heavily dependent on

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<sup>130</sup> Boraston, J. H. (ed.) *Sir Douglas Haig’s Despatches, December 1915-April 1919* (Dent, London, 1919), pp. 201-202.

<sup>131</sup> IWM, 90/28/1, Papers of Major V. Fleming. Letter: Major V. Fleming to Randolph, 06/12/14.



one's interpretation of the role and purpose of cavalry and its ability to achieve those ends in this theatre. Given events like those in the spring of 1918 this point is likely to remain moot. Given the Yeomanry's few experiences of offensive mounted action and the results they experienced, for the most part it is hard to support any suggestion that this was an economic use of their manpower or horseflesh.

For more than half of the Yeomanry regiments it was Egypt and Gallipoli that introduced them to the conflict. These regiments entered the latter theatre as dismounted reinforcements after nearly a year of home service and a period of ambiguous mobilisation orders. Major Ogilvie of the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry recalled one such event when the regiment entrained at Huntingdon, 'wondering if it would be three days or a week (at most) before we were charging Uhlans. But our destination was only the Lincolnshire coast – Grimsby.' The sense of disappointment is well conveyed. Apart from the anomalies of the Hertfordshire Yeomanry and Westminster Dragoons, all those who did not sail for France suffered delayed departures. This was something the authorities used against them. Part of the Welsh Border Mounted Brigade, the Shropshire Yeomanry was amongst the last of the 1<sup>st</sup> line Yeomanry regiments to leave. Before this came about, however, they had been invited to offer themselves as drafts to the 38<sup>th</sup> (Welsh) Division in January 1916 and, on another occasion, to sign an article of 'general service' to go anywhere as anything. Given the attachment to their history, it is not surprising that the proposition of trading their horses for foreign service was not welcomed. In the first case it appears that the suggestions were strongly rebuked in parliament and were subsequently withdrawn.<sup>132</sup> In response to the latter, one yeoman probably summed up the feelings of every yeoman on the English coast when he stated:

We are sure that we are Shropshire Yeomanry. We are glad to think that the generals think well of us; the too we are proud of our spurs; we are no newly raised unit, but the original county cavalry, mobilised, ready to go wherever we are sent and to do anything we are told. We don't want to become infantry, but we very much want to see some fighting before we go home.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 22/02/1916. Vol. 80, Para. 641.

<sup>133</sup> Gladstone, *The Shropshire Yeomanry*, p. 197.

Through no fault of their own, these men were held back from the fighting fronts and resisted the carrots dangled in front of them in the hope that they would leave as a mounted force. To this end, the Montgomeryshire Yeomanry attempted to petition the King, but were subsequently read the Riot Act and threatened about the severity of mutiny!<sup>134</sup> Nonetheless, there were worse evils to contend with. The proposition that brigades might see out the entire conflict in the UK was enough for one yeoman to state that, 'such a situation defies comment...if we do not go out during the war it will leave a scar which neither we nor our sons will be able to forget'.<sup>135</sup> Others noted that they were ashamed to take all the leave that was on offer as family and friends routinely noted that they were 'not away yet'.<sup>136</sup> For this reason it is less surprising that the call to leave dismounted was met with muted enthusiasm. Being part of the same brigade as the Shropshires', Major P. K. Glazebrook of the Earl of Chester's Yeomanry mentioned in his diary that, 'the spirit among our men was admirable and to one with any knowledge of things "out there" was really pathetic'.<sup>137</sup>

Though the South Wales and Welsh Border Mounted Brigades had to wait, the other brigades followed different paths into conflict. For the London, Notts. and Derby, and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> South Midland Mounted Brigades this involved landing in Egypt in April 1915 with their horses, briefly dismounting between August and December to fight in Gallipoli, before returning to their horses.<sup>138</sup> For the Highland, Lowland, Scottish Horse, Eastern, South Eastern, and 2<sup>nd</sup> South Western Mounted Brigades this meant dismounting before leaving the UK and shipping straight to Gallipoli before returning to Egypt dismounted. Though a number had been promised remounts in Egypt before they left Britain, the Gallipoli experience set the tone for the rest of the conflict; the majority of regiments in these Dismounted Brigades later made up the 74<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in 1917. Those who went to Egypt with their horses kept them.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Montgomeryshire Yeomanry was part of the South Wales Mounted Brigade which shared the experiences of the Welsh Border formation. IWM Sound Archive (380). John Thomas Harding, Tape 7. Recording date unknown.

<sup>135</sup> Gladstone, *The Shropshire Yeomanry*, p. 200.

<sup>136</sup> Dunn, *The War the Infantry Knew*, p. 440.

<sup>137</sup> Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry*, p. 57.

<sup>138</sup> Westminster Dragoons and Hertfordshire Yeomanry sailed alongside 42<sup>nd</sup> (East Lancs.) Division to Egypt on 10/09/1914. The North Midland MB was destined for Salonika, but was diverted to Egypt in April 1915 and remained there.

<sup>139</sup> IWM Sound Archive (8272), Edwin Richard Pope, Tape 1. Recorded 1984; and James, *British Regiments 1914-1918*, pp. 16-36.

The thinking behind sending a Yeomanry division (2<sup>nd</sup> Mounted) and a host of dismounted brigades to Gallipoli is not clear. Given the formation of the new armies it perhaps begs comparisons, though it is worth mentioning that General Sir Ian Hamilton made no effort to conceal his fondness for the Yeomanry. Furthermore, the author of the Shropshire Yeomanry's regimental history claimed that, during an inspection whilst commanding Central Striking Force at the beginning of the war, Hamilton said he would find them a role.<sup>140</sup> Whilst this may not suffice as an explanation for the mounted division that landed in Egypt in the spring of 1915, it fits perfectly for those sent to reinforce the peninsula from late summer. Shipped directly to Mudros before landing on the peninsular – perhaps on the advice of Major-General William Peyton who believed they would be 'pinched' in Egypt – there is little doubt that they were needed in the Dardanelles.<sup>141</sup> The reasoning behind their delayed departure is likely to be connected to the completion of their 2<sup>nd</sup> lines as well as their usefulness in coastal defence.<sup>142</sup>

For the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mounted Division sent directly to Egypt, the reasons are clearer. Command there had two tasks: defend the Suez link to India and act as a general reserve and training theatre. Though not of the same calibre as the armies faced in Europe, the canal was uncomfortably placed between two hostile forces in a vast and inhospitable terrain. With the Ottoman led Bedouin Senussi in the west, and a determined Turkish intrusion in the canal area foiled early in 1915, a mounted force was a welcome addition to the expansive theatre.<sup>143</sup> Considered a general reserve for empire, Egypt was close to Mudros – the jumping off point for the Gallipoli operations – and as a result the Yeomanry acted as a useful theatre reserve, taking a significant role in the August 1915 offensive.<sup>144</sup> Despite having missed the landing operations on the peninsula, the regiments of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mounted Division were the first yeomen to make it to Gallipoli in August 1915.<sup>145</sup> They were hastily blooded by

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<sup>140</sup> Gladstone, *The Shropshire Yeomanry*, pp. 193-194.

<sup>141</sup> DHC, D/DOY/A/6/5. Letter: Major-General. Peyton to Lieutenant-Colonel H. G. Henderson, 13/10/1915.

<sup>142</sup> TNA, WO32/5266. CIGS memorandum 23/09/14 - Reorganising the Territorial Force for Foreign Service and Home Defence.

<sup>143</sup> Keegan, J. *The First World War* (Hutchinson, London, 1998), pp. 238-240; and Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', p. 132.

<sup>144</sup> TNA, WO 106/715. Letter: Robertson (CIGS) to Murray (C-in-C M/E), 13/04/1916.

<sup>145</sup> Berkshire Yeomanry, Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars, Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry, Warwickshire Yeomanry, Royal Gloucestershire Hussars, Queen's Own Worcestershire Hussars, Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry, S. Nottinghamshire Hussars, and Derbyshire Yeomanry. Also attached were the London MB (City of London and 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> County of London).

Hamilton at the Salt Lake behind Suvla Bay in circumstances that would have tried any regular formation. Hamilton later commended the 2<sup>nd</sup> South Midlands Brigade (the Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars, Berkshire Yeomanry, and Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry) for their work during their baptism of fire around Scimitar Hill and Hill 100 stating:

The advance of these English Yeomen was a sight calculated to send a thrill of pride through anyone with a drop of English blood running in their veins...for a mile and a half, there was nothing to conceal a mouse, much less some of the most stalwart soldiers England has ever sent from her shores...They moved like men marching on parade.<sup>146</sup>

In a speech in Gloucestershire after the war Hamilton stated the march, 'quite [took] the shine out of the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava'.<sup>147</sup> Ignoring Hamilton's romanticism, the operation was not only a failure of command, but also showed the inexperience of the Yeomanry. Landing a month later in much more secure surroundings, the Sussex Yeomanry would prove this point when they expected to find a rest camp in which to properly learn their dismounted drills.<sup>148</sup> Privately, Hamilton was fully aware of these problems, stating in September 1915 that:

Unfortunately when they got to the infantry attack stage, want of experience of some of the subordinate commanders...neutralised their efforts, and, as a matter of fact, they never made a real ding-dong attack on the Turks at all.<sup>149</sup>

Unfortunately a number of problems limited the opportunities to make good this training. Extreme wastage through illness, the splitting of assets due to the commitment to Salonika, the limited space and resources available in the theatre, the proximity of the enemy, and the domination of his guns; the only occasion to train came too late and after evacuation back to Egypt.

Running parallel to the Dardanelles operations from October 1915, the Salonika expedition absorbed a portion of the Yeomanry. To reach their depleted

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<sup>146</sup> BPP: Cmd. 371, 1919: Final Report of the Dardanelles Commission, Part II, p. 138.

<sup>147</sup> LHCMA, Hamilton 16/545. T/S of speech to British Legion, Stroud, Gloucestershire, 11/10/1936.

<sup>148</sup> Powell Edwards, *The Sussex Yeomanry*, p. 27.

<sup>149</sup> LHCMA, Hamilton 7/1/35. Letter: Hamilton to K. G.(?), 15/09/15.

regiments in Gallipoli, the Yeomanry's drafts passed through Mudros and Egypt, but after the hasty decision of the British and French to reinforce the Balkan front, many were corralled before they passed on to the peninsular. The number of men the Yeomanry could put into the line was already limited and was only made worse by the conditions and shortages of water.<sup>150</sup> At times this became debilitating, as Lieutenant Alexander Muir McGrigor (Hamilton's nephew, seconded from the Gloucestershire Yeomanry as an ADC) observed when he found his regiment had gone up to the line with 60 of their original 360 men; only 75 casualties were caused by the enemy, the others were victims of illness.<sup>151</sup> Similarly, when told by an engineer that he could sort out his trenches with 300 men, Captain E. F. Lawson of the Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars stated it could only be achieved, 'with legalised polygamy and time'; at that moment he had fifty men in his command.<sup>152</sup>

Although the strength at Gallipoli was dwindling, the drafts so urgently required were held up in Egypt and were later formed into composite units for the Anglo-French operations in support of Serbia. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Composite (Yeomanry) Regiment was formed on 16 September 1915 from 'details' of the Sherwood Rangers, South Nottinghamshire Hussars, Derbyshire, and 2<sup>nd</sup> County of London Yeomanry, later to be absorbed into the Notts. and Derby Mounted Brigade in February 1916. Not only did this strain *esprit de corps*, it also severely hampered the capabilities of all the Yeomanry formations it effected.<sup>153</sup> Incensed by this muddled approach, Hamilton wrote forcefully in a letter to Maurice Hankey, 'if Egypt want Yeomanry, in the name of god let them send back one of [Major-General W. E.] Peyton's brigades; let it be made up by its own drafts, and then you have an efficient body of troops. Meanwhile let the other drafts go and join Peyton on the peninsular and there also you will have an efficient body of troops.'<sup>154</sup> He described the events to Lieutenant-General Sir Julian Byng as a 'purposeless military crime' and in a first draft of a letter to General Maxwell (C-in-C Egypt before the arrival of Murray) he wrote, 'of all the

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<sup>150</sup> Those of the mounted division in Egypt had to leave men behind to look after their horses. This depleted manpower further.

<sup>151</sup> LHCMA, Hamilton 7/4/35. 09/10/1915. Diary of Lieutenant Alexander Muir McGrigor.

<sup>152</sup> CBS, TA/3/517. Letter: E. F. Lawson to Olivia (fiancé), 18/10/15.

<sup>153</sup> TNA, WO 95/4821. War Diary British Forces Salonika. 3<sup>rd</sup> Composite (Yeo.) Regt. 16/09/1915.

<sup>154</sup> LHCMA, Hamilton 7/1/44. Letter: Hamilton to Maurice Hankey, 30/11/15.

*contretemps* which have punctuated the progress of this expedition I do not think any has annoyed me quite so much as this.’<sup>155</sup>

By February 1916, those in the composite regiment with no affiliation to the Notts. and Derby Mounted Brigade were shipped back to Egypt and some order came to pass in Salonika; nonetheless, the theatre was not known as ‘the biggest internment camp in Europe’ without reason.<sup>156</sup> Others, such as ‘A’ and ‘B’ squadron of the Lothians and Border horse, landed in November 1916, later to be absorbed into the 8<sup>th</sup> Mounted Brigade which arrived at the end of the month. As part of 3<sup>rd</sup> Echelon, Salonika Army, they undertook duties very similar to those on the Western Front. Together they would eventually furnish a two squadron regiment of cavalry attached to XII Corps on 11 November 1917, but it would not be until September 1918 that they would be put to use in pursuit of the Bulgarian rout.<sup>157</sup> Absorbing up to twelve regiments, there seems to have been little opportunity for them to be tested by the conflict and, given the extreme wastage through malaria, it was for the most part a misapplication of fine material.

The move back to Egypt did not necessarily initiate the intensive training that Gallipoli and Salonika had shown to be wanting. Lt-Col. C. Ponsonby thought Egypt squandered assets and rightly stated that applying forces elsewhere, ‘might have saved thousands of pounds to the Exchequer.’ However, he went on to state that, ‘it might have also deprived the Royal West Kent Yeomanry of a period of complete rest for six months during the war’.<sup>158</sup> It is hard to tell whether the remark was tongue-in-cheek, but few regiments elsewhere had such an opportunity even after prolonged fighting. Much the same feeling could be found amongst the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry who believed, ‘from a military point of view 1916 can be summed up as far as we were concerned in two words – nothing doing. It was certainly for us the most peaceful and uneventful year.’<sup>159</sup> The chief concern of Lieutenant Thorpe of the Royal East Kent Mounted Rifles after arriving in Egypt had been purely financial, as Cairo offered so many dubious attractions. Nonetheless, he still suffered from

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<sup>155</sup> LHCMA, Hamilton 7/1/47. He toned down the LHCMA in the copy sent. Letter: Hamilton to Byng, date unknown (C.11/1915).

<sup>156</sup> Keegan, *The First World War*, p. 275.

<sup>157</sup> TNA, WO 95/4821. War Diary British Forces Salonika. ‘A’ & ‘D’ Sqdn.’s Lothian & Border Horse; and James, *British Regiments 1914-1918*.

<sup>158</sup> Ponsonby, *West Kent (Q.O.) Yeomanry and 10<sup>th</sup> (Yeomanry) Batt. The Buffs, 1914-1919*, p. 32.

<sup>159</sup> Ogilvie, *The Fife and Forfar Yeomanry and 14th (F. & F. YEO.) Battn. R.H. 1914-1919*, p. 30.

disillusion.<sup>160</sup> Those who did find themselves on operations were also not satisfied. The Montgomeryshire Yeomanry were ordered to control Australians during their concentration in Egypt and found plenty to occupy them during the Cairo Riots.<sup>161</sup> None of this, however, was engaging the enemy. Having left British soil relatively late in the war, the Welsh and Welsh border regiments of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dismounted Brigade engaged on the Senussi Campaign were appalled to find they were doing the same jobs they had left in the UK, only under worse conditions. A particular grievance was the Baharia Oasis expedition. By building a line of block houses in the Western Desert the British hoped to reach, engage, and shatter the Senussi known to frequent the Baharia Oasis. Unfortunately, the enemy evacuated the area and the operation to cut off their retreat also failed. As one yeoman remarked, 'it was some months before anyone could admit in a Cairo bar that he was a member of the Baharia Expedition without having his "leg pulled".<sup>162</sup> Why this isolated enemy was not screened whilst the Yeomanry retrained and expanded is not clear.

The problem for many was the want of purpose and a defined role. Thorpe of the Royal East Kent Mounted Rifles summed up this isolation in the spring of 1916 when he wrote in his diary, 'the Yeomanry in this part of the world seem to be nobody's own. Attached only, to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Division with the possibility of being transferred to another, looked upon by the authorities with disfavour for some reason or other, dismounted, uncertain as to where we shall next be sent.'<sup>163</sup> From January 1916 this was largely the fault of General Sir Archibald Murray, who whilst appreciating the material of the rank and file, was slow to convert the dismounted brigades to infantry.<sup>164</sup> Despite Murray's lack of enthusiasm, it should not be assumed that the mounted brigades were completely idle in Egypt or Palestine. Indeed, in February 1916 it would be the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry that was responsible for the deathblow dealt to the Senussi at Agagia. Here they killed the Senussi's Turkish commanding officer and took his second-in-command prisoner. Charging across 1,200 metres of open desert covered by the enemy's machine guns, it has been suggested that they were winning back a reputation that had been let slip through mistakes made earlier in the operation. Impressive though it seemed to the South

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<sup>160</sup> CKS, EKY/Z11. Diary Lieutenant F. R. Thorpe, p. 42.

<sup>161</sup> IWM Sound Archive (380). John Thomas Harding, Tape 7. Recording date unknown.

<sup>162</sup> Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry*, p. 79.

<sup>163</sup> CKS, EKY/Z11. 03/04/1916. Diary Lieutenant F. R. Thorpe, p. 58.

<sup>164</sup> TNA, WO 106/715. Letter: Murray to Robertson, 26/06/1916.

African infantry and a happier Major-General Peyton, the regiment lost 31 men killed and another 28 wounded. Despite admitting that it had been a waste of life and had come at a high cost, one yeoman noted that he, 'would have given absolutely anything to have been in the charge'.<sup>165</sup>

Agagia was not the only successful piece of mounted work in the Middle-East, but defeat was also not unknown to the Yeomanry. Only months following the actions at Agagia, the 5<sup>th</sup> Mounted Brigade suffered terribly from their inexperience during a Turkish raid in the oases of the Katia district. Having been distributed as a screen across a wide front to protect the expanding railway and water pipeline, the Warwickshire Yeomanry, Queen's Own Worcestershire Hussars, and Royal Gloucester Hussars were overrun by an Ottoman force led by the German Kress Von Kressenstein. Despite their enthusiasm for a fight, there was little preparation on the part of the Yeomanry and their dispositions did not allow the outposts to support each other. Under the cover of fog the Turks surprised them and inflicted considerable casualties – crippling four squadrons – which led to the brigade being withdrawn to the canal for reorganisation. As the first engagement with the Turks after Gallipoli this was obviously a blow to confidence. Although an Australian Light Horseman who witnessed the aftermath thought the scene showed evidence of determined resistance, Major-General E. W. C. Chaytor – commander of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles – thought the blame lay entirely with incompetent leadership.<sup>166</sup> General Murray was also clearly influenced by these events as, when asked two months later to make more use of the Yeomanry, he said he had little faith in them, 'owing to the fact that the bulk of their officers [were] ignorant of the rudiments of mounted work.'<sup>167</sup> For this Murray claimed to rely on the ANZAC's and suggested nothing could be made of the Yeomanry without three experienced cavalry officers per regiment; something that never came to fruition.<sup>168</sup>

Through the beginning of 1916 the 5<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Mounted Brigades acted as support for the ANZAC mounted forces, before making greater contributions from the Second Battle of Gaza.<sup>169</sup> Many others remained as independent commands before

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<sup>165</sup> DHC, D/DOY/A/6/5. MS history of Dorset Yeomanry in Egypt and Palestine.

<sup>166</sup> Idreiss, I. L. *The Desert Column* (Angus & Robertson, London, 1932), pp. 56, 60 & 80; and Woodward, D. R. *Hell in the Holy Land – World War One in the Middle East* (UPK, 2006), pp. 43-44.

<sup>167</sup> Murray became GOC-in-C EEF on 10 January 1916. TNA, WO 106/715. Letter: Murray to Robertson, 26/06/1916.

<sup>168</sup> TNA, WO 106/715. Letter: Murray to Robertson, 26/06/1916.

<sup>169</sup> Idreiss, I. L. *The Desert Column*, pp.125, 155, 160, 163 & 214.



being brought together under the Yeomanry Mounted Brigade in June 1917.<sup>170</sup> With Allenby's arrival in the theatre, however, the mounted brigades had a greater opportunity to show their value. In particular, the Yeomanry was able to demonstrate the value of edged weapons in certain circumstances in the theatre, something that heavily influenced the later adoption of swords by the Australian Light Horse.<sup>171</sup> The pursuit of the Turkish army after the Third Battle of Gaza produced a series of locally famous mounted actions by Yeomanry brigades. In the first of these, the 60<sup>th</sup> Division had been held up at Huj by a rear-guard consisting of artillery manned by Austrian gunners as well as Turkish infantry. Considering the open approach too dangerous for infantry, the commander of the 60<sup>th</sup> Division called on the Warwickshire Yeomanry and Queen's Own Worcestershire Hussars on 8 November 1917 to clear the position.<sup>172</sup> They covered much of their approach by following a ridge, but still had 300 open yards to cross once they emerged. Splitting into sections they fell upon different parts of the position and, though a close run thing, they broke the enemy despite their gunners firing at point blank range. The first charge with swords in the Palestine campaign, it was even described by an Australian light horseman as 'spectacular'.<sup>173</sup> Though it proved decisive on a local level, it failed to secure the interception of the Turkish army. The European artillerymen had stuck to their guns and the casualties were appalling. Described by one yeoman as like 'riding into to hell', the day cost them 70 casualties amongst the 120 men involved, including three squadron commanders killed along with 26 other ranks and the vast majority of their horses.<sup>174</sup> Much like Agagia, though Huj was a fine example of grit, self-sacrifice, and personal bravery, a significant number of men and their horses gave their lives for a principle rather than an achievable military objective.

Just five days later at El Mughar the Yeomanry was asked to conduct a similar operation. On a rocky outcrop that dominated the flat plane of advance towards the Judean hills, the Turks had entrenched themselves and had already rebuffed the 52<sup>nd</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> James, *British Regiments 1914-1918*, Appendix III, Part 1.

<sup>171</sup> Bou, J. 'Cavalry, Firepower, and Swords: The Australian Light Horse and the Tactical Lessons of Cavalry Operations in Palestine, 1916-1918' *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 71, No. 1, 2007, pp. 113-115.

<sup>172</sup> Major-General Shea commanded 60<sup>th</sup> division. At that time these Yeomanry regiments were serving with 5<sup>th</sup> Mounted Brigade of the Australian Mounted Division. They were the only ones with swords.

<sup>173</sup> Hogue, O. *The Cameliers* (Melrose, London, 1919), p. 188.

<sup>174</sup> Woodward, D. R. *Hell in the Holy Land*, p. 125; Australian War Memorial, 9/9/9. War Diary 1/1 Warwickshire Yeomanry, AMD. 08/11/1916; and AWM, 9/5/10. War Diary 1/1 Worcestershire Yeomanry, IMD. 08/11/1916. (digitised by AWM).

division. 6th Mounted Brigade, which was leading the Yeomanry Mounted Division, was asked to assist. After reconnoitring the position it was found to have no cover for led horses beyond a wadi that fell nearly two miles short. Undeterred, General C. A. G. Godwin – an ex-Indian cavalryman – decided that the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry and Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars would gallop the distance in open order, whilst the Berkshire Yeomanry stood in reserve. Unlike Huj, however, the Yeomanry had the support of its own machine gun squadrons alongside the divisional artillery, both of which raked the ridge before they arrived. Once there, the Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars and Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry rolled over the defenders, causing those left standing to surrender or rout.<sup>175</sup>

It is interesting to note that the one party of the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry who dismounted to attack suffered worse casualties than those that followed them mounted. Nonetheless, as was acknowledged at the time, El Mugar had not had the determined defenders of Huj. Had the Turkish soldiers stuck to their trenches they would have been beyond the reach of the Yeomanry's swords and would undoubtedly have offered a better defence; as it was, they handed the day to the Yeomanry. Still hardly a 'cheap' operation, on this occasion the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry and Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars only suffered one officer and fifteen other ranks killed, although their second in command – Major Evelyn Rothschild – would later succumb to wounds suffered during the attack. Fighting for what was unquestionably a more valuable prize, 6<sup>th</sup> Mounted Brigade's smart operation opened the path into the Judean hills and saved the 52<sup>nd</sup> Division further casualties on the open plane.<sup>176</sup>

The final Yeomanry mounted operation in this offensive took place after two more days at Abu Shusheh, again throwing 6<sup>th</sup> Mounted Brigade into the maelstrom. Learning from their previous experience, they conducted a very similar operation with artillery and machine gun support alongside clever use of their mounted reserve and a dismounted squadron. Led by the Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars and two squadrons of Berkshire Yeomanry, they took temporary cover when they came under enfilading fire and committed their reserve of the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry. Drawing fire away from the other Yeomanry regiments, they were then free to complete their

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<sup>175</sup> Woodward, *Hell in the Holy*, pp. 134-136.

<sup>176</sup> Preston, R. M. P. *The Desert Mounted Corps – An Account of the Cavalry Operations in Palestine and Syria, 1917-1918* (Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1921), pp. 79-84.

advance and clear the ridge whilst the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry took care of the enfilading machine guns farther south. When the enemy attempted to reform and counter attack they were successfully engaged by the Berkshire Battery RHA and the position was consolidated. With 37 men killed or wounded – including the Liberal M.P. Captain Neil Primrose shot dead – the success of this and the whole series of actions was not lost on Allenby who commended their, 'great good work'.<sup>177</sup>

The mounted brigades of Yeomanry that had inspired little confidence in Murray appear to have learned their trade very well under Allenby's tenure. From Murray's last dispatch it was suggested that some had been placed into an apprenticeship with the ANZAC mounted troops, but for the Yeomanry Mounted Division – and in particular 6<sup>th</sup> Mounted Brigade – it would seem they learned from their professional brigadiers and hard experience.<sup>178</sup> As Jean Bou has shown, some of the success of mounted forces in the East was due to the quality of the enemy: it is unlikely that German opposition would have crumbled in the same way.<sup>179</sup> Nonetheless, the Yeomanry also proved itself flexible and capable of a wide range of operations in the Western Desert, the Sinai, and Palestine. While they were handicapped in the Judean hills when the territory forced them to leave men to hold horses during the fighting, this was ultimately due to the poor decision to send them there in the first place. It was, nonetheless, their last operation in the East and from 3 December most of the division was withdrawn to undertake dismounted machine gun training.<sup>180</sup> Forming the 100<sup>th</sup> to 104<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalions, they were shipped to France in May 1918. Here the 100<sup>th</sup> briefly joined 12<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> Divisions, before serving in the 58<sup>th</sup>, 46<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, and finally 66<sup>th</sup> Divisions, whilst the 102<sup>nd</sup> and 103<sup>rd</sup> became First Army troops and the 104<sup>th</sup> became Second Army troops.<sup>181</sup>

For the Yeomanry of the dismounted brigades there was little fighting before conversion to infantry. Holding the Western Frontier and Canal Defence Line in Egypt from the autumn of 1915, the Yeomanry had been largely sidelined by theatre commanders. Writing in October 1916, CIGS Sir William Robertson repeatedly impressed upon General Sir Archibald Murray the importance of making the most of

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<sup>177</sup> Preston, *The Desert Mounted Corps*, pp. 90-92; and Hughes, *Allenby in Palestine*. Letter: Sir E. Allenby to C. W. Battine, 20/11/1917, p. 89.

<sup>178</sup> General Murray's (GOC-in-C EEF) Fourth Dispatch. *Sir Archibald Murray's Dispatches, June 1916-June 1917* (NMP), p. 173.

<sup>179</sup> Bou, 'Cavalry, Firepower, and Swords', p. 123.

<sup>180</sup> Preston, *The Desert Mounted Corps*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>181</sup> See Appendix 4; and James, *British Regiments 1914-1918*.

the Yeomanry, 'so that only the minimum force necessary may be detained for the defence of Egypt'.<sup>182</sup> In Murray's fourth dispatch of 28 June 1917, he briefly highlighted the issues that had been hindering their conversion at an earlier date ranging from equipment shortages to training times, though for the most part it would seem his own caution mired his decision.<sup>183</sup> With the canal and the Western Desert finally secure and with an offensive now advanced as far as Syria, Murray finally seized this breathing space to unite the dismounted Yeomanry. They came under the banner of the 74<sup>th</sup> Division, although Murray continued to stress that time and equipment issues would continue to slow the process.<sup>184</sup>

The *raison d'être* that Frank Thorpe sought came with conversion. Absorbing 18 regiments from early spring 1917 under the command of Major-General Eric Girdwood, the 74<sup>th</sup> Division was completing its concentration during the opening phases of the first Battle of Gaza in late March. An infantry soldier by profession, Girdwood won over the yeomen with his sympathetic understanding of their grievances. As one yeoman explained:

he early and fully appreciated the fact that a large proportion of his command were men who had trained for years and hoped to the last to fulfil a cavalry role. He adopted as his divisional badge a broken spur, a touch which went straight to the heart of the ex-cavalrymen of the division.<sup>185</sup>

This act of solidarity meant a great deal to men who, to a great extent, had lost their identity upon leaving the United Kingdom. Short of returning their horses, the Yeomanry now had a symbol of identity; something that was reinforced by Girdwood's policy of getting injured yeomen back to their regiments.<sup>186</sup> Once consolidated, the division took its place in the outpost line, although it did not receive proper infantry training until July when battalions were reorganised to include bombing, Lewis Gun, and sniping sections. They went on to do good work at the Second Battle of Gaza, Beersheba, Sheria, Jerusalem, and Jericho before sailing to

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<sup>182</sup> TNA, WO 106/715. Letter: William Robertson to Archibald Murray, 04/10/1916.

<sup>183</sup> General Murray's (GOC-in-C EEF) Fourth Dispatch. *Sir Archibald Murray's Dispatches, June 1916-June 1917*, p. 132.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> Powell Edwards, *The Sussex Yeomanry*, p. 71.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

France in early May 1918 where they played a part on the Somme and the advance on the Hindenburg line.<sup>187</sup> Learning their trade through Allenby's campaign in Palestine, they heard on 3 April that they would be shipped to France. Before they left, Lieutenant-General Sir Philip Chetwode complemented the division on its fine record, whilst Field-Marshal Sir Edmund Allenby expressed his regret at their departure and his pride in having them under his command; as their divisional historian noted, 'these were not mere expressions of polite farewell.' Proving themselves capable of successful and aggressive raids once in France, they were commended in Sir Douglas Haig's dispatches for their distinguished services at Épehy in September 1918. With three Victoria Crosses won between October 1917 and October 1918 and reportedly only two courts-martial held during the existence of the division, it is clear that the 74<sup>th</sup> was a capable and willing formation.<sup>188</sup>

The war raised a contentious issue for the Yeomanry: how should it contribute to the conflict? Pre-war training did little to settle the issue and had been confused by changing doctrine. It would certainly have to undergo further training to achieve wartime efficiency, but its role in the conflict was ambiguous and varied between regiments. Assuming it would take responsibility for padding out the expeditionary force, they could have been trained with the aim of supplementing the cavalry of the line. As a force of civilian volunteers, however, what was to be done with the large proportion who might not reach the benchmark of efficiency? To reduce the importance of riding ability and technically accurate mounted work there was the South African construct of Mounted Rifles, but then the question of requirement raised its head. The war was vast and fought in a number of incomparable theatres, only one of which would really lend itself to the wide scale use of cavalry; not every regiment served in that theatre and not all of those that did were needed as cavalry.

Where they were needed on horseback it is clear that they gave a good account of themselves despite an officer corps with little experience. In France and Flanders this mainly consisted of rear area duties, but in the Middle-East they performed a number of decisive actions utilising the *arme blanche*. Impressive and ultimately successful though they were, in more than one case they proved needlessly wasteful.

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<sup>187</sup> Ward, Major C. H. Dudley. *The 74<sup>th</sup> Yeomanry Division in Syria and France* (Murray, London, 1922), pp. 66-67.

<sup>188</sup> Ward, Dudley. *The 74<sup>th</sup> Yeomanry Division in Syria and France*, pp. 198, 230, 247 & 248; and Powell Edwards, *The Sussex Yeomanry*, p. 165.

Though the value of mobile forces to the Egyptian Expeditionary Force should not be underestimated, there were times when 'Yeomanry spirit' clouded sensible judgment.

Necessity would rule the experience of the majority of regiments, however, and it would be the infantry and Machine Gun Corps that eventually absorbed their services towards the end of the conflict. Most of those who went to Gallipoli and Egypt in 1915 and 1916 had done so after agreeing to dismount; they did not, however, agree to become infantry. Whether the infantry conversion came so late due to War Office appeasement of Yeomanry sensibilities or the lack of time and equipment is unclear. Nonetheless, before 1917 the dismounted brigades were neither cavalry nor infantry and their inexperienced officer corps was given no encouragement or means to develop. Unfortunately, this meant they made a fairly limited contribution before conversion, their numbers and organisation not allowing them to operate effectively as infantry just as their lack of horses prevented their use in mounted form. For the most part the contribution of the dismounted brigades came later in the war in Palestine and France, both after the conversion to infantry. The 74<sup>th</sup> Division was a hangover from the deal done prior to mobilisation and the regiments therein clung strongly to the remnants of their identity, their *esprit de corps* clearly shown by their decorous behaviour and effective discipline. In this form they were commended by Allenby, Rawlinson, and Haig.<sup>189</sup>

On the whole the army did not grasp the full potential of the Yeomanry before 1917 because it was torn between the niceties of the regimental system and territorial rights, as well as operational constraints and strategic uncertainty. This allowed the regiments to remain true to their origins for longer than other units, but it also hampered the creation of a flexible and confident force. As it was, the Yeomanry operated to the best of its abilities in a variety of roles despite poor training and strategic direction. Nonetheless, their legacy should principally be associated with the mounted brigades of Palestine and the broken spur of the 74<sup>th</sup> Division. The former upheld an ideal, an example of what could be made of the auxiliary cavalry if theatre and training allowed it. The latter metaphorically symbolised the resolute Yeomanry spirit in the face of foreign and domestic adversity, embracing as they did the new direction under an understanding officer. It is worth concluding with the sentiments of Sir Ian Hamilton: 'Even with as free a hand as the Lord Almighty, it would be hard to

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<sup>189</sup> Ward, Dudley. *The 74<sup>th</sup> Yeomanry Division in Syria and France*, Forward; KSYM, KSY/2000/28.

invent a better type of fighting man than the British Yeomanry; only, they have never been properly appreciated by the martinets who have ruled our roost, and chances have never been given to them to make the most of themselves as soldiers.'<sup>190</sup> It is fair to say that, given the number of men commissioned, the material within the Yeomanry truly was good. The blame as to why they were not put to better use must fall upon these 'martinets' as well their own pre-war officer corps: the former lacking in faith, and latter failing to inspire it.

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<sup>190</sup> 04/07/1915. Hamilton, Sir. I. S. M. *Gallipoli Diary, Volume I* (Unwin Bros, 1920).

## Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore a number of themes with the ultimate aim of placing the British Yeomanry Cavalry within the context of the British amateur military tradition. Taking theories and observations developed in combined studies of the volunteering movement, it has added specific analysis to match the work produced by Beckett and Cunningham on the Rifle Volunteers. Furthermore, it has analysed the Yeomanry through the literature gap found for the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. As the only truly active manifestation of the volunteer tradition – the Militia being quite different – between 1815 and 1859, this was essential to further our understanding of the volunteering phenomenon. At the same time as building on the understanding of the amateur military movement, this thesis has also dealt with the specific and idiosyncratic features of the Yeomanry. Though it represented an arm of this movement, it was a very separate institution with different ideals and served by a different demographic.

By comparing the number of Rifle Volunteers to the total population, Beckett was able to show that that force was never a ‘popular’ movement in terms of simple figures.<sup>1</sup> Using the same metric for the Yeomanry reveals a similar result, though the disparity between participation and nonparticipation is more pronounced. It is clear that it was neither ‘popular’ nor ‘of the people’, representing as it did a small select interest group. Even in 1820 – its highest strength before the wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – it could only claim the participation of little more than 0.4 per cent of the British male population. Although this takes no account of age, any adjustment is unlikely to alter perspectives a great deal. This participation was quite evenly spread and, unlike the Volunteers, the superiority of Scottish involvement was so small that it hardly warrants mention. In Wales, a country that was always poorly represented by Yeomanry, the proportion dropped slightly below the English figure.<sup>2</sup> By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the lack of a role combined with economic pressures to keep numbers very low – reducing participation below 0.06 per cent of the entire male population of England, Scotland, and Wales in 1895 – but its relatively independent nature and

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<sup>1</sup> Beckett's figures are all above 0.6 from the 1860s. Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> 30,791 of 7,125,954. In Scotland the figure was 0.45% (4,443 of 983,552); in England 0.44% (24,519 of 5,483,679); and in Wales 0.41% (1,455 of 350,487). 1821 Census – digitised by www.HISTPOP.org (University of Essex historical population project).



comparatively minute cost to the tax payer allowed it to remain extant.<sup>3</sup> The proportionately enormous expansion after the South African War saw the institution balloon to a new high in 1904, yet on the whole it still only absorbed 0.15 per cent of the British male population. Although in Scotland the figure reached 0.19 per cent, the 0.06 per cent increase on the combined English and Welsh figure is again of little consequence.<sup>4</sup> Although this simple numerical measure shows the institution to be less successful than the Rifle Volunteer movement, it was also instrumental to its continued existence. Its limited size made it manageable and – ignoring the cost per man – relatively cheap compared to other forces. Furthermore, unlike the Rifle Volunteers, it did not threaten to expand uncontrollably and require greater central intervention. Pivotal in 1904 as in 1820, a significant parliamentary lobby was able to make the Yeomanry's strengths known to both Houses of Parliament. Without this continued political support it is unlikely that it would have been as robust as it was in the face of regular scrutiny from the 1860s.

In line with existing analysis of volunteering in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period, this study has found that the Yeomanry was a vehicle for state support. Men serving voluntarily in the state's interest inadvertently or deliberately expressed loyalism and, as one observer put it, 'it [was] impolitic to discourage or reject them'.<sup>5</sup> Although the end of the Napoleonic Wars brought with it the end of the Volunteers, it did not finish the Yeomanry. Loyalty expressed through this institution was worth more as it was not only a symbol of notional state support, but it also provided physical support. Society was in some way reflected in all these institutions and the Yeomanry predominantly absorbed the middle-class and independent classes. Though this might be expected given the extra costs of mounted service, it should not be assumed that the merits of its composition were unknown to the authorities. Eighteen years before the Treaty of Paris ended the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, Secretary of State for War Henry Dundas explained to one lord lieutenant that it was imperative to keep up the Yeomanry at the end of war to maintain the bond between gentlemen and the middle-class.<sup>6</sup> The reasons for this were entirely associated with

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<sup>3</sup> 9,745 of 16,728,817. *Forty-First Annual Report of the Registrar General, Scotland*, p. vii; and *Fifty-Eighth Report of the Registrar General, England and Wales*, p. V – digitised by www.HISTPOP.org.

<sup>4</sup> Figures given at two decimal places to highlight the negligible differences. *Fiftieth Annual Report of the Registrar General, Scotland*, p. vii; and 21,999 of 16,316,647 = 0.13%. *Sixty-Seventh Report of the Registrar General, England and Wales*, p. V – digitised by www.HISTPOP.org.

<sup>5</sup> NAS, GD364/1/1136. Copy of letter: Lord Melville to General Vyse, 14/07/1803.

<sup>6</sup> NAS, GD51/1/887/1. Copy of letter: Lord Melville to Duke of Buccleuch, 10/06/1797.

the nature of the perceived threat: an attack on the constitution or standing political system. How many officers were motivated by the same ideals is impossible to say – even more so for the other ranks – but it can easily be said that all stood to lose something to revolution.

It then differed from the other institutions by being raised for two clear and distinct roles, something not only made clear by government circulars, but also by regiments. Whilst resisting invasion was a primary concern in maritime counties, the frequency with which the words ‘loyalty’, ‘religion’ ‘property’, and ‘protection’ appear in recruitment materials and mottos hints at other motivations. This is shown perfectly by the Himley Troop of Staffordshire Yeomanry; a landlocked district in which the Yeomanry called on the support of, ‘All Enemies of Blasphemy and Rebellion – all Lovers of Church and King...to check REVOLUTION or RADICAL REFORM [and] to maintain PEACE and GOOD ORDER.’<sup>7</sup> It is not hard to see how the force became associated with the Tory cause, though even in this extreme example, there are more personal or local issues at stake. Himley and its neighbourhood were to be the troop’s only concern, primarily because of its remoteness. Without it, ‘all that is most dear may fall a prey to these licentious sons of violence.’ Wider Conservative touchstones are present in abundance, but there is also a seam of self-protection running through the text; whilst they *might* put down the mob for grander political motives, they certainly would do to defend their livelihoods, interests, and lives. In this way the government was able to play on the concerns of the upper echelons of society as well as the middle-class to meet their own ends. Revolutionary conditions were perceived to have persisted after the war, with the example of France and the rebellion in Ireland enough to confirm the worst fears of Britain’s policy makers. As a result these relationships were fostered and maintained well beyond 1815 to provide a national, trustworthy constabulary that was considerably cheaper and more politically acceptable than a professional police force. Though a fall in domestic violence forced the Yeomanry to retreat into the midlands and the north, the return of unrest in the 1830s saw it hastily augmented. Its upkeep was associated with the demand on its services, suggesting that governments – Whig ministries included – utilised the force in times of need. None, however, could afford to extinguish it entirely before the 1850s, by which time a cross-party interest had

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<sup>7</sup> SRO, D1300/4/1/2. Circular: Raising Yeomanry in Himley.

developed within the force. There need not be any debate over causality in light of Dundas's opinions: the Yeomanry was structured to cater for a trustworthy demographic and its governing statutes made it a pseudo-police as well as an anti-invasion force. The cost of service unique to the cavalry was simply a convenient expedient to maintaining political reliability. Although the demand for civil support subsided in the 1850s, the composition of the force changed very little. This was largely a result of continued costs and leisure taking the place of constabulary work; the force had, in certain circles, become fashionable.

Politically the Yeomanry was, until at least the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a Conservative institution. There was a growing Whig and Liberal contingent, but before the 1870s it did not challenge the Conservative interest. Controversial though this is, it should not entirely cloud interpretations of government support or their use in aid of the civil power. The Yeomanry was not an ideologically driven political force, but the product of a system dominated by parties that would not tolerate revolutionary change. Except for the likes of Cobbett and the radicals, the effects of reform would have been largely alien to farmers and small town businessmen and uninteresting when conditions were good. Furthermore, despite often voicing disapproval, prominent Whigs often found the Yeomanry useful; as Napier stated during the Chartist panic, magistrates must have something if the police are not adequate and the army not available. The force was then more significant to policing than it is often given credit for. Admittedly this must in part be blamed upon the resistance of provincial society to establishing professional constabularies, but if the 1839 'Voluntary Act' proved anything it was that professional police forces were expensive and could still be found wanting. Fitting within a simpler, locally controlled system, the Yeomanry cost less and had a mostly competent, if controversial, track record. At times its response was excessive, but on the whole it was no more so than the regular army. More importantly, despite some similarities in responsibilities, the British Yeomanry did not reflect the pattern of its Irish counterpart by being flagrantly aggressive or driven by any form of factionalism.

Gilks strenuously argued against the importance of the Yeomanry as a constabulary, going as far as suggesting that it did practically nothing before 1815.<sup>8</sup> Hales, on the other hand, painted the force as a Tory self-protection movement,

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<sup>8</sup> Gilks, 'A History of Britain's Volunteer Cavalry', pp. 164-167.

motivated locally only to defend the rights of the few and mobilised to suppress opposition to the government and their own interests.<sup>9</sup> Tory and selfish it might have been during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but this thesis has shown that, for the most part, its actions were not party political and nor did it simply enforce unpopular policy in the way of continental Gendarmeries. Furthermore, it is clear that the force was not unquestionably loyal. It operated in line with the state response, Whig ministries included, and rarely after 1819 was it violent without provocation and magisterial support. It is entirely probable that the localisation and concentration of the civil power meant that there was potential for blending provincial positions of authority with Yeomanry officership. It is also probable that this was at times exploited by powerful men whose interests were threatened by mob violence. However, the want of stability and security does not have to allude to repression. Although from a modern perspective it is an anachronism and constitutionally compromised, at a time when police forces were viewed in the same way, it should not be surprising that it survived for so long in this role. Faced with a divided and confrontational society in Ireland, the Yeomanry proved more of a hindrance to peace and order; working against less violent protest, the Yeomanry of the rest of Britain managed to avoid disbandment. This alone stands as testament to the fact that, in the eyes of the British state, it was not as politically dangerous as the crowds it faced and nor was it as biased as its opponents contended.

The essential reliability required of the Yeomanry was largely ensured by expense, but for both officers and other ranks there were also significant benefits to membership. The aristocracy were predictably well represented and, despite criticism that they never fully patronised the force, this representation barely changed in more than 100 years. To some extent the force might then be seen as a bastion of aristocratic values and a vestige of their dwindling power in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nonetheless, the basis of the officer corps was always the squirearchy, but this also should not be allowed to detract from the presence of the *nouveau riche* and its increasing share from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This became ever more obvious after the turn of the century and was expressly shown by the London regiments formed for the Boer War. Even before this date, however, it is clear that the force provided a ladder for social climbing. Though they rarely reached the apex of the movement, there is

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<sup>9</sup> Hales, 'Civilian Soldiers in Staffordshire, 1793-1823', p. 142.

clear evidence that wealthy businessmen and their sons patronised the movement and it is unlikely that this was simply due to trade security.

Entertainments soon became closely intertwined with the social cachet of membership, so much so that it eclipsed policing and anti-invasion concerns later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. If hunting offered amusement for the leisured classes and provided a reason to reside in the provinces, then the Yeomanry simply added to this motivation. Considering its explicit connections to hunting, the institution was a vital part of provincial society and a further hub around which social events took place. It is without question that membership to the officer corps was expensive, but then so were most gentlemanly pursuits. Although its social side was more obvious in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is clear that this presence was established from its very beginnings. Though it is easy to make accusations of vested interest against the Yeomanry's officers given their prominent position in local society, there was clearly more to membership than self-protection. Officership not only provided authority and an association with Victorian militaristic values, but also a club atmosphere and a setting quite different to the other volunteers. This exclusivity seems to have endured and was something fostered and encouraged through country sports and the events of polite society, at least as far as the First World War.

The entertainment of high society was not the institution's sole public interaction and, despite limited participation and controversial constabulary work, relations between the institution and the people were largely cordial. In fact, regiments went out of their way to avoid confrontation where there was potential for it to flare up. Being predominantly rural and having an officer corps that owned land, the Yeomanry did not experience the difficult relations found between metropolitan Volunteer corps and city populations when searching for drill and range space.<sup>10</sup> Although county corps' were unwelcome in some independent boroughs, it was rare for them to visit without disorder already present. Whilst many corps were billeted in county towns and other urban centres during training, they were temporary visitors and brought more benefits than trouble. There is further evidence to show that regiments 'shopped' locally year round, but their largest contributions to the local economy came during training.<sup>11</sup> Dinners, accommodation, balls, and other events

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<sup>10</sup> Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, p. 97.

<sup>11</sup> Clive, R. H. *Memoranda Relative to the Worcestershire Yeomanry Cavalry*, pp. 56-79; and SRO, D1300/2/3. Letter: Colonel Staffordshire Yeomanry to Secretary Staffordshire TFA (08/01/1909).

were lavishly laid on by the force and this money flowed into host towns. On a much larger scale the Volunteers had brought enormous sums to towns and cities during the Easter reviews from 1861, but these were wound up in the late 1870s.<sup>12</sup> Although on a different scale, Yeomanry patronage was exceedingly long-lived and from 1801 enterprising businesses advertised theatre services, venues, bands, and articles of dress specifically for the Yeomanry. Similarly, Yeomanry regiments themselves advertised for services.<sup>13</sup> Assuming they had not riled the local population, it would seem in many cases Yeomanry regiments were not only profitable for local business, but were welcome. The modern association of 'Peterloo' with the Yeomanry has made it appear detached from mainstream society; a tool of the government sourced from, but not interacting with, the people. This interface with the public – as well as through Yeomanry sports and spectacle – prove that in many cases interaction was both broad and positive in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup>

Where the Yeomanry might be expected to reflect society more effectively it also fell short. The other ranks of the movement were comprised predominantly of the middle-class and, though conditions were different for the Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa, for much of the Yeomanry's existence the working-class was chiefly barred by costs. There are anomalies – in a number of cases the wealthy equipped servants or employees – but it was not their movement and they did not truly belong to it. At the same time – and despite the force's name – it was not an agricultural movement. Though perhaps half its number was closely associated with the countryside at most stages of its existence, a large portion came from other sources. From its inception many of these men were occupied in trades connected to county towns and suggest a wider interest with less significance placed on paternalism. This rural-urban divide is then important to understanding Yeomanry manpower, in particular its expansion after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There was increasing urban involvement in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and, after the Boer War, this was more visible with the addition of metropolitan regiments; these alone accounted for a significant volume of the increase after 1900. Although the social character of the force remained stable for the period in question, one reaction to South Africa was the

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<sup>12</sup> Beckett, *Riflemen Form*, p. 98.

<sup>13</sup> *The Bury and Norwich Post*, 08/07/1801; *Caledonian Mercury*, 02/02/1826; *The Leicester Chronicle*, 24/09/1836; *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 02/11/1839; *The Ipswich Journal*, 28/01/1843; *The Era*, 12/06/1886; *The North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 16/05/1899

<sup>14</sup> *The Morning Post*, 04/10/1819; 13/10/1819; 15/10/1819; 29/10/1819; and *The York Herald*, 27/05/1820.

need for many regiments to widen their focus to find their rank and file. Nonetheless, despite occupations and backgrounds becoming less important, it is still clear that, even under the pressing conditions of the First World War, some Yeomanry regiments continued to vet their intake. Though this always limited the number of potential candidates, the Yeomanry alone mobilised this class group with any reliability; an argument never wasted by those who supported its cause.

Motivations are extremely difficult to establish when the whole period is taken into consideration. National defence patriotism cannot be argued away with accusations of self-interest and it is clear that prominent men initially threw their weight behind the movement with genuine concern for invasion. This is further strengthened by the part regiments were to play in driving the land in the event of invasion. Although officership carried social cachet and other indirect benefits, it should not be assumed that men did not feel they were sacrificing their time for a useful national cause as well as their own their own security. For the other ranks, Hales's argument that no reason existed for men to join beyond coercion or prudence is misguided or deliberately misleading.<sup>15</sup> It is clear that some regiments show evidence of tenancy clauses and in other examples service was utilised to curry favour with landlords, but it has been shown here that this was not universal to the movement and was essentially redundant by the 1850s. More convincing in most cases is a class alliance forged through paternalism, deference, and mutual interests. At the same time, tax breaks were attractive whilst they existed and the exemption from the Militia ballot cancelled the potential cost of a substitute from any money spent on service with the Yeomanry until the 1830s. Nonetheless, just like the officer corps, there was also entertainment to be had hunting and at the races. This leisure argument is only enforced by the declining numbers after the 1870 efficiency reforms; demanding greater commitment from yeomen, some it would seem were not willing to take the duty more seriously.

Military efficiency in the Yeomanry never compared to the regular cavalry – at least not before intensive wartime training – although it was always prepared to ape that force. Fond of their swords, practically all regiments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century practised sword drill and attempted cavalry evolutions. However, it is clear from inspection reports that, even if not wholly unpromising, the tactics were all but useless in the

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<sup>15</sup> Hales, 'Civilian Soldiers in Staffordshire', p. 242.

enclosed country of the United Kingdom. What part they would have played in the event of invasion or how they might have attempted to meet it was, for the most part, not a real concern after 1815. Later in the century some appreciation was shown of the Yeomanry's knowledge of a district and its usefulness as scouts to the regular army, however, few yeomen were willing to lay down their swords and take up the rifle. Though a number appeared happy to adopt a mounted rifle doctrine – the Hampshire Carabiners, the East Kent Mounted Rifles, and the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry – the force was still armed with the carbine and it continued to carry the sword. In South Africa this was of little concern: the force itself was not mobilised and those who served had only the rifle to fight with. The results of raising a force largely from scratch were mixed, but it was shown that Yeomanry machinery was still capable of mobilising populations and that an amateur mounted infantry could be useful to open operations. Although it showed weaknesses in the home force's officer corps, the amateur force hastily readied to fight in South Africa bore the brunt of the fighting when compared to other British auxiliaries and unquestionably raised the profile of the Home Yeomanry. Despite some harsh criticism, the way in which a cross-section of society sustained the Imperial Yeomanry is testament to popular sentiment as well as the potential versatility and promise of the force.

Though it had regained public recognition in the aftermath of war, its involvement and experience raised questions concerning its use in future conflict. The *arme blanche* controversy encouraged by the South African War did little for the Yeomanry's efficiency and placed it in an awkward position in 1914: drilled and organised as cavalry, but without a sword before mobilisation, they were not masters of any trade. Although the mounted brigades appear to have recruited relatively successfully after Haldane's reforms, in such a stagnated conflict there was little demand for more cavalry; outside of the Middle-East, the regular force proved sufficient for most purposes. For more than half of the Yeomanry the result was coastal defence followed by a compromised period of dismounted cavalry. This locked up first rate material and squandered its use for most of 1916, only truly being made efficient in the 74<sup>th</sup> Division the following spring.

Despite almost decadal government enquiries from the 1860s, very little was changed in the Yeomanry's responsibilities or the way the force was maintained. The aftermath of the First World War, however, saw the largest changes to Yeomanry organisation and finally forced effective reform. Nonetheless, it remains clear that



regimental and parliamentary lobbying allowed a number of regiments to change their fate when planning had indicated otherwise. Some of the new Yeomanry led the way in cavalry mechanisation, but other regiments maintained enough political and social cachet to uphold their independence even when converted to artillery. This Yeomanry 'spirit', born out of social exclusivity and its associations with influential society, was the key to its survival in 1920 just as it had been in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Perhaps the most important result of the existence of the Yeomanry – as with all the volunteers – was the part it played in projecting military values onto society. This research has shown that it did this by absorbing a class typically unrepresented in military uniform and continued to mobilise this section of society for more than 120 years. Though on the whole it failed to reflect society, as part of the wider amateur military tradition it was able to spread the benefits of military service to a greater proportion of the population. Controversy surrounds its 19<sup>th</sup> century position, almost entirely due to the part it played in putting down violent – and sometimes peaceful – protest. However, as has been demonstrated, the history of Britain's Yeomanry Cavalry is far richer and more diverse than previous studies have shown. As a social institution, constabulary, or instrument of war, this thesis has well demonstrated that the force was a continuously effective vector for civilian participation in military activities. What is more, though a further expression of the amateur military tradition, it was a distinct and individual institution absorbing particular interest groups, upholding its own values, and taking on specific responsibilities.

Appendices

Appendix 1:

Yeomanry Officers in the Houses of Parliament, 1847-1908<sup>1</sup>

| <u>House</u> | <u>Year</u> | <u>Serving Offs.</u> | <u>Retired Offs.</u> | <u>Political Party</u> |                     |                |              |
|--------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|----------------|--------------|
|              |             |                      |                      | <u>Whig</u>            | <u>Conservative</u> | <u>Liberal</u> | <u>Other</u> |
| H of L       | 1847        | 6                    | 0                    | n/a                    | n/a                 | n/a            | n/a          |
| H of C       |             | 16                   | 0                    | 1                      | 13                  | 0              | 0            |
| H of L       | 1852        | 12                   | 0                    | n/a                    | n/a                 | n/a            | n/a          |
| H of C       |             | 40                   | 0                    | 4                      | 27                  | 9              | 0            |
| H of L       | 1870        | 11                   | 0                    | 0                      | 8                   | 2              | 1            |
| H of C       |             | 54                   | 1                    | 0                      | 27                  | 26             | 2            |
| H of L       | 1882        | 18                   | 0                    | 0                      | 12                  | 4              | 2            |
| H of C       |             | 39                   | 1                    | 0                      | 22                  | 16             | 3            |
| H of L       | 1897        | 35                   | 9                    | 0                      | 22                  | 10             | 12           |
| H of C       |             | 31                   | 9                    | 0                      | 21                  | 5              | 4            |
| H of L       | 1907        | 36                   | 21                   | 0                      | 40                  | 11             | 6            |
| H of C       |             | 28                   | 7                    | 0                      | 16                  | 15             | 4            |
| H of L       | 1908        | 36                   | 22                   | 0                      | 41                  | 11             | 6            |
| H of C       |             | 27                   | 7                    | 0                      | 15                  | 12             | 7            |

<sup>1</sup> Details extracted from the corresponding years of *Dod's Parliamentary Companion*.

Appendix 2:

Occupational Backgrounds of Serving Yeomen – Details for Chapters Three and Five

Chapter Three References:

Table 3.1 provides the occupational backgrounds of serving yeomen from a number of different regiments. Figures are a percentage of each sample and are given to one decimal place to highlight the nuances in the smaller returns.

Listed below are the references for the samples used in Table 3.1. For those muster rolls that did not include occupations, the closest census year was used to cross-reference names.

Ayrshire Yeomanry, 1831 – 53 man sample. NAS, GD3/9/11/16.

Ayrshire Yeomanry, 1880 – 73 man sample. Cooper, W. S. *A History of the Ayrshire Yeomanry Cavalry*. pp. 95-104.

Bedfordshire, 1910 – 21 man sample. Beach, *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam*, pp. 22-23.

Buckinghamshire, 1840s – 115 man sample. Huntington Library, Stowe Mss, STG Military Box 3 (3), 4 (1) as referenced in Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 140.

Royal 1<sup>st</sup> Devon, 1834 – 56 man sample. DRO, 5124/Z/LM/1.

Royal 1<sup>st</sup> Devon, 1915 – 239 man sample. DRO, 1262/0/LD/118.

Dorset Yeomanry, 1860-1900 – 253 man sample. DHC, D/DOY/A/4/7.

Dorset Yeomanry, 1900-1914 – 515 man sample. DHC, D/DOY/A/4/8.

East Kent Yeomanry, 1838 – 75 man sample. CKS, EKY/AG3.

East Kent Yeomanry, 1850-60s - 107 man sample. CKS, EKY/AG5.

Essex Yeomanry, 1827 – 20 man sample. ERO, L/L 1/8.

Essex Yeomanry, 1901-03 – 520 man sample. ERO, DZ 102/1.

Essex Yeomanry, 1908-09 – 513 man sample. ERO, DZ 102/1.

Flintshire Yeomanry, 1831 – 57 man sample. Clywd RO, D/HA/1262 as referenced in Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 140.

Forfar Yeomanry, 1831 – 183 man sample. NAS, GD45/12/251.

Lanarkshire (Upper Ward) Yeomanry, 1820s – 167 man sample. Wood, *Records of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry*, pp. 135-140.

Manchester & Salford Yeomanry, 1819 – 101 man sample. *Manchester Observer*, 10/08/1822.

Oxfordshire Hussars, 1817 – 172 man sample. ORO, L/M VI/i/1 as referenced in Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 139.

Oxfordshire Hussars, 1831 – 355 man sample. ORO, L/M VI/ii/1.

Warwickshire Yeomanry, 1855-70 – 101 man sample. Morgan, 'The Warwickshire Yeomanry in the Nineteenth Century: Some Fresh Aspects', pp. 55-75.

### Chapter Five References:

Tables 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 show the occupational trends, composition, and military experience of the Imperial Yeomanry. The documents listed below were used to produce the charts and figures in chapter five. The figures used are predominantly percentages of each sample, the overall sample being 2,965 men across all three contingents.

TNA, WO 128

- First Contingent – 1,174 man sample: /8; /16; /22; /24; /32; /48.
- Second Contingent – 1,074 man sample: /64; /76; /88; /100; /112; /114.
- Third Contingent – 717 man sample: /125; /135; /145; /155; /165.

### Occupational Groups:

Below is the division of occupations utilised in the tables in chapter three and charts in chapter five. Though they generally fit very well, some occupations will always be difficult to pigeon hole, whilst the terms used by some sources are antiquated or ambiguous. For example, a dairyman, could refer to a dairy labourer just as much as to a farmer. Nonetheless, every effort has been made to decipher the background of ambiguous returns by using the other information contained in the census. Those who could not reliably be placed have been omitted.

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Independent: | Gentlemen, landowners, and those who list their occupation on the census as 'independent'. Effectively those whose main source of income came from the land in their ownership. |
| Farmer/son:  | Those listed as farmers, market gardeners, dairymen or their sons on the census.  |
| Merchant:    | Those selling or producing goods on a large scale. Includes merchants of grain and other goods, but also warehousemen and manufacturers.  |

- Professional:** Those of the 'professions' and the business world. Includes lawyers, physicians, bankers, accountants, civil servants, auctioneers, engineers, surveyors, and businessmen. At the other end of the scale this also includes clerks.
- Small Business:** Those providing small-scale local services. Includes innkeepers, hotel keepers, publicans, butchers, grocers, bakers, confectioners, victuallers, fishmongers, and tailors.
- Artisan:** Those providing a highly skilled trade-based service. Includes blacksmiths, farriers, saddlers, wheelwrights, carpenters, joiners, masons, fitters, builders, and coach builders.
- Skilled Labour:** Those employed to undertake labouring duties that require a level of knowledge or skill. Includes grooms, bricklayers, apprentices, and machine operators.
- Unskilled Labour:** Those employed to undertake general labouring duties that do not require any particular knowledge or skill. Includes agricultural labourers, construction labourers, manufacturing labourers, mine workers, unskilled shop workers, and servants.
- Unknown:** Those who cannot be placed within any of the above groups, who are not mentioned within the original source, or cannot be identified through the census.

Appendix 3:

The Yeomanry and Special Reserve Cavalry Regiments, 1913

Titles are those given in the army list of 1913 and are used throughout the thesis regardless of date to provide continuity (unless a more specific title is required or a corps became extinct). They are shown in order of precedence.

Special Reserve

King Edward's Horse

North Irish Horse

South Irish Horse

Yeomanry Regiments

Prince of Wales's Own Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry

Warwickshire Yeomanry

Alexandra Princess of Wales's Own Yorkshire Hussars

Nottinghamshire (Sherwood Rangers) Yeomanry

Queen's Own Royal Staffordshire Yeomanry

Shropshire Yeomanry

Earl of Carrick's Own Ayrshire Yeomanry

Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry

Queen's Own Yorkshire Dragoons

Prince Albert's Own Leicestershire Yeomanry

North Somerset Yeomanry

Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry

Lanarkshire Yeomanry

Northumberland Hussars

South Nottinghamshire Hussars

Denbighshire Hussars

Westmoreland and Cumberland Yeomanry

Pembrokeshire Yeomanry

Duke of Connaught's Own Royal East Kent Mounted Rifles

Hampshire Carabiners

Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars

Derbyshire Yeomanry  
Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry  
Royal Gloucestershire Hussars  
Hertfordshire Yeomanry  
Berkshire Yeomanry  
1<sup>st</sup> County of London (Middlesex Hussars) Yeomanry  
Royal 1<sup>st</sup> Devon Yeomanry  
Duke of York's Loyal Suffolk Hussars  
Royal North Devon Hussars  
Queen's Own Worcestershire Hussars  
Queen's Own West Kent Yeomanry  
West Somerset Yeomanry  
Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars  
Montgomeryshire Yeomanry  
Lothians and Border Horse  
Queen's Own Royal Glasgow and Lower Ward of Lanarkshire Yeomanry  
Lancashire Hussars  
Princess of Wales's (Queen Mary's from 1910) Surrey Yeomanry  
Fife and Forfar Yeomanry  
King's Own Royal Norfolk Yeomanry  
Sussex Yeomanry  
Glamorganshire Yeomanry  
Lincolnshire Yeomanry  
City of London (Rough Riders) Yeomanry  
2<sup>nd</sup> County of London (Westminster Dragoons) Yeomanry  
3<sup>rd</sup> County of London (Sharpshooters) Yeomanry  
Bedfordshire Yeomanry  
Essex Yeomanry  
Northamptonshire Yeomanry  
East Riding of Yorkshire Yeomanry  
Lovat's Scouts  
Scottish Horse

Appendix 4:

Service of First Line Yeomanry Regiments, 1914-1918<sup>1</sup>

| <u>Regiment</u>                       | <u>Service, in Order from First Engagement</u> | <u>Notes</u>  |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Ayrshire Yeomanry                     | GPI & EGT-DM; EGT, PTE & WF-I                  | 01/17 formed 12 <sup>th</sup> (Ayr & Lanark Yeo) R. Scots Fusiliers, 74 <sup>th</sup> Div.  |
| Bedfordshire Yeomanry                 | WF-M; WF-MG; WF-M                              | Originally with 1 <sup>st</sup> Cav. Div. Briefly formed MG Bn. with Essex before reverting to Cav. after Spring offensive. 04/18 Sqdns. split within 1 <sup>st</sup> Cav. Div. |
| Berkshire Yeomanry                    | EGT-M; GPI-DM; EGT & PTE-M; PTE & WF-MG        | 04/18 with Bucks Hussars formed 'C' (later 101 <sup>st</sup> ) MGC.   |
| Royal Bucks Hussars                   | As Berkshire                                   | As Berkshire.   |
| Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry | EGT-DM; EGT, PTE & WF-I                        | 03/17 formed 10 <sup>th</sup> (Shrops. & Cheshire Yeo.) KSLI, 74 <sup>th</sup> Div.   |
| Denbighshire Hussars                  | EGT-DM; EGT, PTE, WF-I                         | 02/17 formed 24 <sup>th</sup> (Denbigh Yeo.) R. Welsh Fusiliers, 74 <sup>th</sup> Div.  |
| Derbyshire Yeomanry                   | EGT-M; GPI-DM; EGT & SLA-M                     | End the war in Macedonia as GHQ mounted troops.   |
| Royal 1 <sup>st</sup> Devon Yeomanry  | GPI & EGT-DM; EGT, PTE & WF-I                  | 01/17 formed 16 <sup>th</sup> (R. 1 <sup>st</sup> Devon & R. North Devon Yeo.) Devonshire Regiment, 74 <sup>th</sup> Div.   |
| Royal North Devon Yeomanry            | As Royal 1 <sup>st</sup> Devon                 | As Royal 1 <sup>st</sup> Devon.   |

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<sup>1</sup> Note: GPI: Gallipoli; EGT: Egypt; PTE: Palestine; SLA: Salonika; WF: Western Front; ITY: Italy; MPA: Mesopotamia. Following letter – M: Mounted; DM: Dismounted Cavalry; I: Infantry; MG: Machine Gun Battalion; C: Cyclists. Extracted from James, *British Regiments 1914-1918*.



| <u>Regiment</u>                | <u>Service, in Order from First Engagement</u>                            | <u>Notes</u>  |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| QQ Dorset Yeomanry             | EGT-M; GPI-DM; EGT & PTE-M  | Replaced Oxfordshire in S. M. Mtd. Bde. when they shipped to WF.  |
| Essex Yeomanry                 | As Bedfordshire   | Originally with 3 <sup>rd</sup> Cav. Div. Otherwise as Beds.  |
| Fife & Forfar Yeomanry         | GPI & EGT-DM; EGT & PTE-I   | 12/16 formed 14 <sup>th</sup> (Fife & Forfar Yeo.) Black Watch, 74 <sup>th</sup> Div.   |
| Glamorganshire Yeomanry        | EGT-DM; EGT, PTE & WF-I   | 2/17 formed 24 <sup>th</sup> (Pembroke & Glamorgan Yeo.) Welsh Regt, 74 <sup>th</sup> Div.  |
| QQ Royal Glasgow Yeomanry      | 'C' Sqdn. & RHQ; EGT & GPI-DM; WF & PTE-M. 'A' & 'B' Sqdn.'s: WF-M; WF-I. | 08/17 joined 18 <sup>th</sup> H. L. I. Originally a Bantam Bn. later (R. Glasgow Yeo.) Bn.  |
| Royal Gloucestershire Hussars  | EGT-M; GPI-DM; EGT & PTE-M  | Ended war in 5 <sup>th</sup> Cav. Div.  |
| Hampshire Carabiners           | WF-M; WF & ITY-I  | Div. then corps Cav. WF. 09/17 joined 15 <sup>th</sup> (Hants. Yeo.) Hants Reg. To Italy with 41 <sup>st</sup> Div., returned to WF in March. |
| Hertfordshire Yeomanry         | EGT-M; GPI-DM; PTE-M. 'D' Sqdn. MPA-M, 'B' Sqdn. WF-M then to PTE-M.      | To div. cav. WF on return from EGP then split by Sqdn.'s.   |
| Royal East Kent Mounted Rifles | GPI & EGT-DM; EGT, PTE & WF-I   | 02/17 formed 10 <sup>th</sup> (R. E. Kent & W. Kent Yeo.) The Buffs, 74 <sup>th</sup> Div.  |
| QQ West Kent Yeomanry          | As REKY   | As REKY.  |
| Lanarkshire Yeomanry           | GPI & EGT-DM; EGT, PTI & WF-I   | 01/17 formed 12 <sup>th</sup> (Ayr & Lanark Yeo.) R. Scots Fusiliers, 74 <sup>th</sup> Div.   |
| Lancashire Hussars             | 'B' Sqdn.'s & RHQ; EGT & WF-M. 'C' & 'D' Sqdn.'s: WF-M                    | Reformed 05/16. 09/17 joined 18 <sup>th</sup> King's Regt, later (Lancashire Hus. Yeo.) Bn.   |

| <u>Regiment</u>   | <u>Service, in Order from First Engagement</u>                | <u>Notes</u>   |
|---|---|--|
| Duke of Lancaster's own Yeomanry                        | 'A' Sqdn.'s: EGT & PTE-M. 'C', 'D' Sqdn.'s & RHQ: WF-M; WF-I. | 09/17 'C', 'D' & RHQ joined 12 <sup>th</sup> Manchester Regt. Later (Duke of Lanc.'s Own Yeo.) Bn.   |
| Leicestershire Yeomanry                                 | WF-M; WF-MG; WF-M   | Originally with 3 <sup>rd</sup> Cav. Div. Briefly formed MG Bn. with N. Somerset before reverting to Cav. after Spring offensive. 04/18 Sqdns. split within 1 <sup>st</sup> Cav. Div.  |
| Lincolnshire Yeomanry                                   | EGT & PTE-M; PTE & WF-MG                                      | 04/18 with E. Riding York.'s formed 'D' (later 102 <sup>nd</sup> ) MGC.  |
| (CL) Rough Riders                                       | EGT-M; GPI-DM; EGT & SLA-M; EGT & WF-MG                       | 04/18 with 3COL formed 'E' (later 103 <sup>rd</sup> ) MGC.   |
| (1COL) Middlesex Hussars                                | EGT-M; GPI-DM; EGT, SLA & PTE-M                               | Ended war in 4 <sup>th</sup> Cav. Div.   |
| (2COL) Westminster Dragoons                             | EGT-M; GPI-DM; EGT-M; EGT & WF-MG                             | 04/18 formed 'F' (later 104 <sup>th</sup> ) MGC.   |
| (3COL) Sharpshooters                                    | As Rough Riders   | As Rough Riders.   |
| Lothians & Border Horse                                 | 'B' Sqdn. & RHQ: WF-M; WF-I. 'A' & 'D' Sqdn.'s: WF-M; SLA-DM. | 09/17 'B' & RHQ joined 17 <sup>th</sup> R. Scots Regt. 11/15 'A' & 'D' 11/15 shipped to SLA, 05/17 formed XII corps cav. in SLA.   |
| Lovat's Scouts (1/1 <sup>st</sup> & 1/2 <sup>nd</sup> ) | GPI & EGT-DM; EGT, SLA & WF-I                                 | 09/16 1/1 <sup>st</sup> and 1/2 <sup>nd</sup> formed 10 <sup>th</sup> (Lovat's Scouts) Cameron Highlanders with a company of 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> Scottish Horse. 13 detachments also worked at corps level on observation and sniping on WF and ITY from 1916. |
| Montgomeryshire Yeomanry                                | EGT-DM; EGT, PTE & WF-I                                       | 03/17 formed 25 <sup>th</sup> (Montgomery & Welsh Horse Yeo.) R. Welsh Fusiliers, 74 <sup>th</sup> Div.  |
| KO Royal Norfolk Yeomanry                               | GPI-DM; EGT-DM; EGT, PTE & WF-I                               | 02/17 formed 12 <sup>th</sup> (Norfolk Yeo.) Norfolk Regt, 74 <sup>th</sup> Div.   |

| <u>Regiment</u>   | <u>Service, in Order from First Engagement</u>   | <u>Notes</u>   |
|---|--|--|
| Northamptonshire Yeomanry   | WF & ITY-M   | Div. cav. to corps cav. WF. Also time as GHQ troops.   |
| Northumberland Hussars  | WF-M   | Div. cav. to corps cav. WF.  |
| S. Nottinghamshire Hussars  | EGT-M; GPI-DM; EGT & SLA-M; EGT & WF-MG  | 04/18 with Warwickshire Yeo. formed 'B' (later 100 <sup>th</sup> ) MGC.  |
| Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry   | EGT-M; GPI-DM; EGT, SLA & PTE-M  | Ended war in 5 <sup>th</sup> Cav. Div.   |
| OO Oxfordshire Hussars  | WF-M   | First reg. overseas: landed Dunkirk 22/09/14. Remained mounted with the 1 <sup>st</sup> then 2 <sup>nd</sup> Cav. Div. for the war.  |
| Pembroke Yeomanry   | As Glamorgan   | As Glamorgan.  |
| Scottish Horse (1/1 <sup>st</sup> , 1/2 <sup>nd</sup> & 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> ) | 1/1 <sup>st</sup> & 1/2 <sup>nd</sup> : PTE & EGT-DM; EGT & SLA-I; WF-I. 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> : PTE & EGT-DM; EGT-MG. | 10/16 1/1 <sup>st</sup> & 1/2 <sup>nd</sup> formed 13 <sup>th</sup> (Scottish Horse Yeo.) Black Watch. 1/3 <sup>rd</sup> formed 26 <sup>th</sup> (Scottish Horse) Sqdn. MGC. |
| Shropshire Yeomanry   | As Cheshire  | As Cheshire.   |
| N. Somerset Yeomanry  | As Leicestershire  | As Leicestershire though latterly split within 3 <sup>rd</sup> Cav. Div.   |
| W. Somerset Yeomanry  | GPI & EGT-DM; EGT, PTE & WF-I  | 01/17 formed 12 <sup>th</sup> (W. Somerset Yeo.) Somerset LI, 74 <sup>th</sup> Div.  |
| OO Royal Staffordshire Yeomanry   | EGT & PTE-M  | Ended war in 4 <sup>th</sup> Cav. Div.   |
| Loyal Suffolk Hussars   | GPI & EGT-DM; EGT, PTE & WF-I  | 01/17 formed 15 <sup>th</sup> (Suffolk Yeo.) Suffolk Regt, 74 <sup>th</sup> Div.   |
| QM's Surrey Yeomanry  | 'A' & B Sqdn.'s: WF & SLA-M. 'C' Sqdn.: EGT & WF-M; WF-I   | Div. cav. then split: 'A' & 'B' to SLA XVI Corps Cav. 'C' briefly to MEF then back to France in XV Corps Cav. 09/17 joined 10 <sup>th</sup> R. W. Surrey Regt.               |

| <u>Regiment</u>                    | <u>Service, in Order from First Engagement</u> | <u>Notes</u>   |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Sussex Yeomanry                    | GPE & EGT-DM; EGT, PTE & WF-I                  | 01/17 formed 16 <sup>th</sup> (Sussex Yeo.) R. Sussex Regt, 74 <sup>th</sup> Div.                                |
| Warwickshire Yeomanry              | EGT-M; GPI-DM; EGT & PTE-M; EGT & WF-MG        | As S. Notts. Hussars.  |
| Welsh Horse                        | GPI & EGT-DM; EGT, PTE & WF-I                  | As Montgomeryshire.  |
| Westmoreland & Cumberland Yeomanry | WF-M; WF-I                                     | Div. cav. to corps cav. WF. 09/17 joined 7 <sup>th</sup> Border Regt. Later (Westmoreland & Cumberland Yeo.) Bn. |
| R. Wiltshire Yeomanry              | WF-M; WF-I                                     | Div. cav. to corps cav. WF. 09/17 joined 6 <sup>th</sup> Wilts. Regt. Later (Wilts. Yeo.) Bn.                    |
| QQ Worcestershire Hussars          | EGT-M; GPI-DM; EGT & PTE-M                     | Ended war as corps cav. XX Corps.  |
| QQ Yorkshire Dragoons              | WF-M; WF-C                                     | Div. cav. to corps cav. WF. 02/18 dismounted to become cyclists. Ended war as corps cyclists to II corps.        |
| PWO Yorkshire Hussars              | WF-M; WF-I                                     | Div. cav. to corps cav. WF. 11/17 joined 9 <sup>th</sup> W. Yorkshire Regt. Later (Yorks. Hussars Yeo.) Bn.      |
| East Riding of Yorkshire Yeomanry  | As Lincolnshire                                | As Lincolnshire  |

Appendix 5:

The Form of the Reconstituted Yeomanry regiments, 1923<sup>1</sup>

The following lists show the form taken by Yeomanry regiments after the two year grace period. They are shown in alphabetical order by county rather than in order of precedence.

Second Line Cavalry

Earl of Carrick's Own Ayrshire Yeomanry  
Earl of Chester's Yeomanry  
Lanarkshire Yeomanry  
Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry  
Prince Albert's Own Leicester Yeomanry  
Northumberland Hussars  
Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry  
Shropshire Yeomanry  
North Somerset Yeomanry  
The Queen's Own Royal Staffordshire Yeomanry  
Warwickshire Yeomanry  
Prince of Wales Own Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry  
Queen's Own Yorkshire Dragoons  
Princess of Wales Own Yorkshire Hussars

Yeomanry 'Mounted Scouts'

Lovat Scouts (reduced from two regiments to one)  
Scottish Horse (reduced from three wartime regiments to one)

Royal Horse Artillery

City of London (Rough Riders) (with HAC) – 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade RHA

Royal Field Artillery

Bedfordshire Yeomanry – 105<sup>th</sup> Brigade RFA  
Buckinghamshire & Berkshire Yeomanry – 99<sup>th</sup> Brigade RFA

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<sup>1</sup> Paper Cmd. 2272, session 1924. GAR British Army, 1923, pp. 107-125.

## The British Yeomanry Cavalry, 1794-1920

Westmoreland & Cumberland Yeomanry – 51<sup>st</sup> Brigade RFA  
Royal 1<sup>st</sup> & North Devon Yeomanry – 96<sup>th</sup> Brigade RFA  
Dorset & West Somerset Yeomanry – 94<sup>th</sup> Brigade RFA  
Essex Yeomanry – 104<sup>th</sup> (2 Batt.) Brigade RFA  
Glamorganshire Yeomanry – single battery in 81<sup>st</sup> (Welsh) Brigade RFA  
Queens Own Royal Glasgow Yeomanry – 101<sup>st</sup> (2 Batt.) Brigade RFA  
Hampshire Carabiniers – 95<sup>th</sup> (2 Batt.) Brigade RFA  
Hertfordshire Yeomanry – 86<sup>th</sup> Brigade RFA  
Royal East & West Kent Yeomanry – 97<sup>th</sup> Brigade RFA  
Lancashire Hussars – 106<sup>th</sup> (2 Batt.) Brigade RFA  
Duke of York's Suffolk & King's Own Norfolk Yeomanry – 108<sup>th</sup> Brigade RFA  
South Notts. Hussars – 107<sup>th</sup> (2 Batt.) Brigade RFA  
Pembrokeshire Yeomanry – 102<sup>nd</sup> Brigade RFA  
QO Worcestershire Hussars & QO Oxfordshire Hussars – 100<sup>th</sup> Brigade RFA  
Queen Mary's Surrey & Sussex Yeomanry – 98<sup>th</sup> Brigade RFA

### Royal Garrison Artillery

Denbighshire Hussars – two batteries of 61<sup>st</sup> Medium Brigade RGA

### (Royal) Tank Corps Armoured Car Companies

Derbyshire Yeomanry – 24<sup>th</sup> Armoured Car Coy  
Fife & Forfar Yeomanry – 20<sup>th</sup> Armoured Car Coy  
Royal Gloucestershire Hussars – 21<sup>st</sup> Armoured Car Coy  
2<sup>nd</sup> County of London (Westminster Dragoons) Yeomanry – 22<sup>nd</sup> Armoured Car Coy  
3<sup>rd</sup> County of London (Sharpshooters) Yeomanry – 23<sup>rd</sup> Armoured Car Coy  
Lothian and Border Horse – 19<sup>th</sup> Armoured Car Coy  
Northamptonshire Yeomanry – 25<sup>th</sup> Armoured Car Coy  
East Riding of Yorkshire – 26<sup>th</sup> Armoured Car Coy

### Divisional Signals

1<sup>st</sup> County of London (Middlesex) Yeomanry – 2<sup>nd</sup> Cav. Div. Signals

Disbanded

Lincolnshire Yeomanry

Montgomeryshire Yeomanry – absorbed by 7 Bt. Royal Welch Fusiliers.

Welsh Horse

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