

Reinforcement Policy and Practice in the British and Dominion Forces during the First World War

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Abstract:

Manpower has become a crucial theme within the historiography of the First World War in Britain and the former Dominions. Beginning with the social turn in history from the 1960's, historians in Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand have considered many aspects of manpower, including the procurement, composition and strategic distribution of men between 1914 and 1918. The recruitment and expansion of civilian armies, including the advent of conscription in most parts of the British Empire, has dominated this trend, which represented the growing desire to understand the societal impact of war. Yet, national reinforcement policies, as part of the broader imperial war effort, has received insubstantial attention. This is surprising when considering its importance in continuing the strategy of attrition, which was adopted by the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, from 1916. It was critical to sustaining the imperial army throughout extensive campaigns and, without one, frontline units would have collapsed under the weight of their own casualties.

Therefore, this thesis will explore the creation and development of reinforcement policy and practice for the British and Dominion forces between 1914 and 1918. It will consider how Britain and, to some extent, the Dominions, principally Australia, Canada and New Zealand, responded to industrial warfare and attempted to sustain their armed forces throughout a war of attrition. It will consider how they, as well as the British-led imperial army, created and developed reinforcement systems that stretched back to each nation. It will assess its ability to produce trained reinforcements in a timely manner, as well as how the medical system worked in unison to 'recycle' wounded veterans back into the frontline. By framing this research within a comparative framework, the thesis shall examine how British authorities created their own reinforcement policy and attempted to guide and develop this in each Dominion. It will show how the Dominions attempted to weigh imperial desire against their national priorities and, through joint and individualised policies, yielded very different results. Overall, it will demonstrate that the creation of reinforcement policy in the First World War was far from smooth. Its success was erratic and far from efficient, which led to varying levels of hardship within the imperial army. Though some, such as the Canadian Expeditionary Force, were able to offset this with careful manpower management, others, such as the British Expeditionary Force, were pushed to the brink of collapse by 1918.

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Abbreviations:

Army Council Instructions	ACI
Assistant Director of Medical Services	ADMS
American Expeditionary Force	AEF
Australian Imperial Force	AIF
Australian and New Zealand Army Corps	ANZAC
Adjutant Quartermaster General	AQMG
Army Service Corps	ASC
British Expeditionary Force	BEF
Casualty Clearing Station	CCS
Canadian Expeditionary Force	CEF
Canadian General Base Depot	CGBD
Chief of General Staff	CGS
Chief of Imperial General Staff	CIGS
Citizen Militia Force	CMF
Commanding Officer	CO
Deputy Assistant Adjutant General	DAAG
Deputy Adjutant General	DAG
Director-General of Army Medical Services	DGAMS
Extra Reserve	ER
Field Service Regulations	FSR
General Base Depot	GBD
General Headquarters	GHQ
General Officer Commanding	GOC
Infantry Base Depots	IBD
Inspector-General of Communications	IGC
Imperial Service Obligation	ISO
Mediterranean Expeditionary Force	MEF
Machine Gun Corps	MGC

Ministry of National Service	MNS
National Reserve	NR
Non-Commissioned Officer	NCO
National Service League	NSL
New Zealand Expeditionary Force	NZEF
Officer Commanding	OC
Overseas Military Forces of Canada	OMFC
Officer Training Corps	OTC
Permanent Base	PB
Permanently Unfit	PU
Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps	QMAAC
Quartermaster-General	QMG
Royal Army Medical Corps	RAMC
Royal Air Force	RAF
Royal Field Artillery	RFA
Royal Flying Corps	RFC
Routine Order	RO
Special Reserve	SR
Temporary Base	TB
Territorial Force	TF
Travelling Medical Boards	TMB
Training Reserve	TR
Voluntary Aid Detachment	VAD
Veteran Reserve	VR
Women's Army Auxiliary Corps	WAAC

Covid Statement:

This research had always been designed as a transnational analysis of reinforcement policy and practice within the imperial army during the First World War. The intention was to address how British and Dominion governments, principally Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, attempted to sustain the imperial army throughout a global war of attrition. Until March 2020, research had been proceeding smoothly. I had gone through a large amount of material in both national and regional archives in Britain, and I was successful in obtaining two grants, awarded by the Western Front Association and the Royal Historical Society, to fund international research trips. This comprised of a three week visit to Canada in May 2020, as well as a four week trip to Australia and New Zealand the following August. Due to the global outbreak of Covid, however, all three were cancelled indefinitely, with no knowledge of when international travel would resume. Despite repeated attempts at booking flights, recreating schedules, and putting together contingency plans, travel to Australia, Canada and New Zealand was prohibited until various points in 2021. Even then, most archives and national libraries remained shut, or at limited capacity. This made it impossible to undertake research overseas before 2022, beyond what had been digitised or sent to me by other academics.

This was exacerbated by the lack of progress with archival material at home. From March to July 2020, all archives were shut, with no notice of when they would reopen. When the British Library and The National Archives, Kew, reopened in the late summer, they placed a daily cap on the number of documents you could view, which made visitation extremely uneconomical. Other archives, such as the Imperial War Museum, remained shut until the spring of 2021.

This stalled research for over 12 months and led to a serious backlog in the amount of work that needed to be completed. This, combined with the PhD bursary nearing its end, led to the difficult decision to minimise the transnational research. Instead, it would focus on the British Army and provide points of comparison with Dominion forces, (mostly) based upon digitised sources in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. As will become evident, the breadth and depth of this comparison varies throughout each chapter. Whilst some, such as chapters one and two, makes little to no reference to Dominion forces, others, including chapter six, are based upon a transnational analysis. For this reason, the supervisory team and I felt that

the title, 'Reinforcement Policy and Practice in the British and Dominion Forces during the First World War', was justified.

Collectively, Covid had a substantive impact upon the PhD. It delayed major archival research at home for over 12 months, and led to the cancellation of all international research trips. As a result, the thesis had to be redesigned from a transnational analysis of British and Dominion forces to a British-centric study that incorporated transnational sections.

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Introduction

The Great War has been defined by its horrendous cost, as millions of men were killed, wounded, and taken prisoner in battles that attempted to overcome the deadlock of trench warfare on the Western Front. Whilst this has underpinned the popular understanding of the war as a futile endeavour in Britain and the former Dominions, it unequivocally demonstrates that the Great War was a total war of manpower and endurance. This interpretation has been recognised in both Britain and Canada, where manpower has become a central theme within each national historiography. Driven forward by the social turn in history from the 1960's, historians have tackled many facets of manpower, including the procurement, composition, and strategic distribution of men between 1914 and 1918. This has yet to be fully replicated in Australia and, to a certain extent, New Zealand, as both nations have been influenced by their own unique trends. Australian historiography has been dominated by debates over the Anzac legend and conscription referenda, whilst research in New Zealand has focused upon the Second World War.

Despite these developments, national reinforcement policies, as part of the broader imperial war effort, has not received the attention it deserves. This is surprising when considering its relationship with the strategy of attrition, which was adopted by the British Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, from 1916. Specifically, a working reinforcement policy was critical to sustaining the extensive campaigns conducted from 1915 as, without one, frontline units would have collapsed under the weight of their own casualties. In effect, reinforcement policy and practice underpinned the continuation of the Great War and formed the last link in the chain of manpower, from procurement on the home front to their deployment on the front line. Although John Crawford, Matthew Buck, Alison Hine and Richard Holt have analysed aspects of reinforcement policy in Britain, Canada and New Zealand, further research is needed. None tackle the process fully and it is crucial to understand how each nation, and the British Empire as a whole, dealt with the vexed question of reinforcing the imperial army over a four-year period.¹

¹ Crawford, John and Buck, Matthew, *Phenomenal and Wicked: Attrition and Reinforcement in New Zealand Expeditionary Force at Gallipoli* (New Zealand Defence Force, 2020), <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/ebook.html> [last accessed 16/09/2022]; Hine, Alison, *Refilling Haig's Armies: The Replacement of British Infantry Casualties on the Western Front, 1916-1918* (Warwick: Helion, 2018); Holt, Richard, *Filling the Ranks: Manpower in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017).

The thesis will not cover all aspects of reinforcement policy and, instead, focus upon the supply of other rank reinforcements, predominantly infantry, on the Western Front. Bar brief references, officers were excluded as the archival material needed to survey this, the Military Secretary papers, were destroyed during the Second World War. Though other arms are discussed, the infantry on the Western Front took the bulk of casualties throughout the First World War and, therefore, posed the largest problem to military planners.

Nor will this analysis cover the British Empire in its entirety. Instead, it will consider Britain and the Dominions of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. It was impossible to assess all five Dominions in the space permitted and, due to the smaller military contributions of South Africa and Newfoundland, they were excluded. Though Douglas Delaney has demonstrated the value of incorporating India into an analysis of imperial military power, it differed from the Dominions in an administrative, constitutional, and military manner. India and the Indian Army was administered by the British government through the Indian Office, whereas the Dominions were self-governing nations that were only bound by British foreign policy. They could choose the kind and quantity of their contribution in war, and regularly defended their autonomy in relation to defence policy. For the same reasons, the military contributions of British colonies are only referred to in relation to their use as a source for colonial labour.²

These parameters raise an important point on terminology. The term reinforcement policy is not a contemporary phrase, but one created to portray the development of civil and military thought about how to sustain a field force throughout war. This begun with a series of questions upon the outbreak of the South African War in 1899 and continued to evolve until the end of the First World War in November 1918. As will be discussed, its evolution led to a succession of reinforcement systems that were guided by a host of different policies, including medical, recruitment and training. Its remit was extensive but, to ensure clarity and continuity, the term reinforcement policy and practice was created to summarise the multitude of developments that occurred over a 19 year period.

² Delaney, Douglas, *The Imperial Army Project: Britain and the Land Forces of the Dominions and India, 1902-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 2-3 and 32-33; Perry, F. W, *Commonwealth Armies: Manpower and Organisation in Two World Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 124; Winegard, Timothy C., *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 2-3.

By extension, manpower is a somewhat antiquated and gendered term. It does not convey the full extent of British and Dominion mobilisation between 1914 and 1918, which included all genders. Though modern terminology, such as personnel policy, would be more appropriate, it does not reflect contemporary language in archival material and its subsequent use within the historiography, including Keith Grieves' seminal analysis, *The Politics of Manpower*.³ To ensure continuity, therefore, the term manpower has been adopted. The same is also relevant to the indigenous populations of the British Empire, who were racially characterised as colonial manpower or other monolithic groupings, such as Canadian Indians. Others, such as Aboriginal Australians, were racially categorised, and regularly described as 'full-blood' and 'half-caste'. This derogatory language was rooted in Social Darwinism and ethnography, which gained popularity throughout the British Empire in the 19th century. Though the phrase indigenous is used where possible, contemporary terminology has been used for the same reasons noted above.⁴

Reinforcement policy and practice does not neatly fall into one topic and, instead, lies on the intersection between manpower and operational history. The latter has been defined in recent years by research on the 'learning curve'. Although it provides a fascinating insight into the growing professionalisation and conduct of citizen armies across several topics, including command, training, tactics, operations and technology, military historians have frequently ignored military administration.⁵ Bar Ian Malcolm Brown's research into logistics

³ Grieves, Keith, *The Politics of Manpower, 1914-1918* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

⁴ Winegard, *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions*, pp. xiii and xiv; Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 'Report of the Special Committee to review historical inequalities in commemoration' (2021), <https://www.cwgc.org/media/noantj4i/report-of-the-special-committee-to-review-historical-inequalities-in-commemoration.pdf> [last accessed 24/11/2022].

⁵ Boff, Jonathan, *Winning and Losing on the Western Front: The British Third Army and the Defeat of Germany in 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Cook, Tim, *At the Sharp End: Canadian's Fighting the Great War, 1914-1916*, Vol. 1 (Toronto: Penguin, 2007); Cook, Tim, *Shock Troops: Canadian's Fighting the Great War, 1917-1918*, Vol. 2 (Toronto: Penguin, 2009); Grey, Jeffrey, *A Military History of Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 80-118; Pederson, P. A., 'The AIF on the Western Front: The Role of Training and Command', in McKernan, M. and Browne, M. (eds), *Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace* (Canberra: Allen and Unwin, 1988), pp. 167-193; Pugsley, Christopher, *The Anzac Experience: New Zealand, Australia and Empire in the First World War* (Auckland: Raupo Publishing, 2001), pp. 165-244; Rawling, Bill, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Sheffield, Gary and Todman, Dan (eds), *Command and Control on the Western Front: The British Army Experience 1914-1918* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2004); Travers, Tim, *How the War Was Won: Command and Technology in the British Army on the Western Front, 1917-1918* (London: Routledge, 1992).

on the Western Front, few studies consider the important role played by rearward services in supporting the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and broader imperial army.⁶

Manpower is an intricate topic that encompasses several themes crucial to understanding the creation and development of reinforcement policy and practice. These historiographical strands evolved from the pioneering social turn in the 1960's, which expanded historical research beyond the parameters of a purely top-down military and diplomatic historical perspective. It represented the desire to understand the societal impact of the Great War, which the rigid military and political debates had failed to do.⁷ This emerged in Britain and Canada through the rising dominance of social history, which is encapsulated by Ian Beckett and Keith Simpson's *A Nation in Arms*. They urged historians to explore the relationship between army and society, to understand the impact of war on society and its institutions.⁸

Recruitment, Expansion and the 'Nation in Arms'

The apex of this historiographical shift in Britain was Peter Simkins' *Kitchener's Army*, which assessed recruitment across the UK between 1914 and 1916. It provided a precise snapshot of how the British army, reliant on 'decisions by crisis', indiscriminately expanded under Lord Kitchener's guidance. Simkins demonstrated how Kitchener, upon becoming Secretary of State for War, dispensed with the pre-existing plans of expansion through the Territorial Force (TF) and instead created the New Armies. It was both chaotic and unsystematic, as it crippled pre-existing War Office recruitment machinery. To convey this, Simkins structured his analysis into two parts; the first focused on an overarching analysis of policy and recruitment, whilst the second concentrated on key themes the army struggled to cope with. For instance, Simkins argues that Kitchener failed to create a clear plan for expanding the army, which led to confusion in recruitment. Before the Retreat from Mons in August 1914, there was speculation that the government's initial call for 100,000 men was all

⁶ Brown, Ian Malcolm, *British Logistics on the Western Front, 1914-1919* (London: Praeger, 1998); Faraday, Bruce Douglas, 'Half the Battle: The Administration and Higher Organisation of the AIF, 1914-1918' (University of New South Wales PhD Thesis, 1997).

⁷ Prost, Antoine and Winter, Jay, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 7-15.

⁸ Beckett, Ian F. W, 'The nation in arms, 1914-1918', in Beckett, Ian F. W and Simpson, Keith (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A social study of the British army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 2.

that was needed; it dissuaded men from leaving their jobs and enlisting, whilst those who did were, at times, turned away. After the Retreat from Mons, however, the government pursued a policy of indiscriminate recruitment. Recruitment offices, with limited military and medical staff, were unable to properly process the long lines of men, with many who were hurriedly passed later dismissed as medically unfit.⁹

Simkins also noted the disadvantageous position of the regular army to lead, organise and train new recruits. For instance, Kitchener's First Army, formed of six divisions and called K1, was fortunate enough that it had a nucleus of regular officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) left behind by battalions of the original BEF. Yet, after the recruitment boom and decision to replicate K1, regimental depots were overwhelmed, with many holding three to four times their establishment. With insufficient officers, the army began to rely on a greater number of retired 'dugouts' and newly commissioned NCOs and officers, who had limited experience or training. Combined with a lack of arms, ammunition, uniforms and accommodation, the expansion of the New Armies suffered greatly. Rather than forging a clear recruitment policy that controlled the flow of recruitment, Kitchener and the War Office expanded beyond the means of peacetime infrastructure.¹⁰

Simkins' research also recognised the role society played in sustaining military expansion. Whilst recruitment was a military endeavour, Simkins noted that local communities and prominent civilians used their initiative to relieve a substantial amount of pressure on the War Office; they ran recruitment campaigns, established units, and maintained them until the War Office was in a position to take them over. For instance, the Newcastle and Gateshead Chamber of Commerce played a key role in creating a number of 'Pals' battalions, including the Newcastle Commercial Battalion and the 1st and 2nd Tyneside Pioneers, which became the 16th, 18th and 19th Northumberland Fusiliers, respectively. They were supported by a host of sub-committees that clothed and equipped recruits, as well as providing financial assistance to their dependents. This was not universal, however, and varied across regions. Whilst this level of support in the Tyne led to the Northumberland Fusiliers expanding by 19 battalions, other parts of the country, such as Devon, fell behind.

⁹ Simkins, Peter, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies, 1914-1916* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 31-78

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 66-69 and 222-224.

Whilst a smaller, agricultural community that had smaller manpower reserves, Simkins identifies that the three Devonshire battalions created were not completely 'native' and, instead, relied on men from London and Birmingham to fill the gaps. Nevertheless, he demonstrated how civic society and the army effectively worked together to create Britain's largest institution.¹¹

Kitchener's decision to expand through the New Army has attracted criticism from Peter Dennis, who claimed the TF and County Territorial Associations were ignored. Designed by Richard Haldane during the reorganisation of the auxiliary forces between 1906 and 1908, the TF was a skilled force designed to expand the army in war. Though Dennis claims that Kitchener disregarded this force due to his unfounded prejudices of part-time soldiers, Simkins and Beckett have dismissed the feasibility of utilising the TF for expansion.¹² Though designed to support and expand a future expeditionary force, Haldane changed their role to home defence after he faced resistance from Parliament. Despite Edward Spiers' claim that this was not a significant drawback, as Haldane's reforms had created the machinery and framework needed to reinforce an expeditionary force, its effects were crippling. Men enlisted for home service and could only go abroad if they signed the Imperial Service Obligation. Only 1,090 officers and 17,788 men had done this by August 1914 and combined with the Territorial Pledge, which legally protected men and units from amalgamation, disbandment or transfer, the TF was unsuited for mass expansion. Haldane's retreat on the TF as a second line formation effectively undermined its original purpose, even if Spiers thought he had achieved the upmost success in a Liberal peace-time budget.¹³

Historians have also challenged Dennis' interpretation based on Kitchener's fear of invasion, which began once the Admiralty claimed a strike force of 70,000 could land before the Royal Navy could intervene. Kitchener therefore saw the TF as a home defence force and,

¹¹ Ibid, pp. 89-90; White, Bonnie. J, 'Volunteerism and Early Recruitment in Devonshire, August 1914-December 1915', *The Historical Journal*, 53:3 (2009), pp. 641-666.

¹² Dennis, Peter, *The Territorial Army, 1906-1940* (Woodbridge: Royal historical Society, 1987), pp. 30-33.

¹³ Beckett, Ian F. W, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558-1945*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 215-231; Beckett, Ian F. W., 'The Territorial Force', in Beckett, Ian F. W. and Simpson, Keith (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 129-136; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 42-46; Spiers, Edward M., *Haldane: An Army Reformer* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1980), pp. 186-199.

to improve their ability to repel invasion, retained two regular divisions at home.¹⁴ Whilst these debates have focused on key issues, Simkins' analysis has provided the first judicious review of his tenure, and fairly rehabilitates his reputation and achievements. Though a 'great disorganiser' whose decisions caused chaos, Kitchener foresaw the need for a large army, capable of fighting an industrial war lasting a minimum of three years. He successfully interpreted the national mood and utilised civilian support to create Britain's first 'citizen army'.¹⁵

Rather than a definitive piece in the Canadian historiography, the creation and expansion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) has been covered by a multitude of historians, including Stephen Harris, Desmond Morton, Tim Cook, Andrew Brown, Robert Brown, and Steven Loveridge. Collectively, they have criticised how the CEF was recruited and expanded and have focused their research on the Minister of Militia and Defence, Samuel Hughes. Following similar lines as Kitchener's critics, Hughes, an 'Imperial Nationalist', had a disdain for regular soldiers and saw the militia as the true 'citizen soldiers' capable of proving 'their mettle'.¹⁶ Consequently, he saw the Chief of General Staff (CGS) at Militia Headquarters, a British regular officer called Lieutenant-General Sir Willoughby Gwatkin, as the 'chief enemy', and ignored the mobilisation plans he had created in 1911. Rather than calling up the regionally and ethnically representative division for overseas service, Hughes made a direct appeal to militia commanders and their men to assemble at Valcartier. The result was chaos, as units were created at random, whilst their commanders were often selected for their political patronage. The small Canadian Permanent Force, roughly 3,000 men in strength, were initially excluded from the CEF. The only infantry battalion, the Royal Canadian Regiment, were originally sent to Bermuda as a garrison, whilst the two cavalry regiments, the Royal Canadian Dragoons and Lord Strathcona's Horse, were utilised as emergency drafts in the wake of the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915. Combined with the nine and 80 Permanent Force officers selected to lead and train the CEF respectively, they were wasted

¹⁴ Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 227; Bowman, Timothy and Connelly, Mark, *The Edwardian Army: Recruiting, Training and Deploying the British Army, 1902-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 108; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 42-43.

¹⁵ Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 321-326.

¹⁶ Morton, Desmond, *When Your Number's up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1993), p. 7; Wood, James, *Militia Myths: Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier, 1896-1921* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), pp. 215-216.

as a nucleus. Though their quality should not be overestimated, both officers and NCOs, who had been trained in Canada and in Britain, could have been used to train and lead the CEF. Instead, senior positions were given to unqualified militia officers and, as Stephen Harris claims, up to 20 percent of officers in the CEF lacked the militia qualifications needed for the rank they held. Although such qualification by no means guaranteed efficiency, it demonstrates Hughes contempt for 'professional' standards.¹⁷

This criticism continued throughout the recruitment phase, where Hughes in quick succession adopted three methods that, at times, overlapped. However, the most stinging comments have been levelled against his decision to urge prominent individuals and communities to create and maintain battalions for the CEF. Rather than a steady expansion, Canadian society sponsored 258 units between 1915 and 1916. Although an outward sign of patriotism and communal support, it was an excessive duplication of effort, with units competing against one another to attract recruits. Eight units alone were competing in Toronto, with battalions paying an average of \$2,554 on advertisements. This, as well as declining recruitment, led to significant delays and led to most units going overseas incomplete. Overall, Brown and Loveridge calculate that 73.6 percent of battalions sent during this period were below strength and, considering only 48 battalions saw active service across four divisions, recruitment in Canada was seriously flawed.¹⁸

This interpretation, though accurate, has been modified by broader research. For example, James Walker's analysis of recruiting indigenous and ethnic minority groups has portrayed Hughes' methods in a more positive light, claiming they were somewhat protected from institutional racism. Indeed, when reports reached Hughes that ethnic minorities were consistently rejected at recruitment centres, he had attempted to break down racial barriers

¹⁷ Brown, Andrew L., 'Cutting its coat according to the cloth: The Canadian Militia and staff training before the Great War', *War and Society*, 34:4 (2015), pp. 263-286; Brown, Robert and Loveridge, Steven, 'Unrequited Faith: Recruiting the CEF 1914-1918', *Canadian Military History*, 24:1 (2015), pp. 70-73; Cook, Tim, *The Madman and the Butcher: The Sensational Wars of Sam Hughes and General Arthur Currie* (London: Penguin, 2010), pp. 57-71; Duguid, A. F., *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919: From the Outbreak of the Great War to the Formation of the Canadian Corps, August 1914-September 1915, Vol. I, Part I* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), pp. 432-434; Harris, S. J., *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army, 1860-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), pp. 96-107; Morton, *When your number's up*, pp. 11-15 and 54-60.

¹⁸ Brown and Loveridge, 'Unrequited Faith', pp. 70-73; Cook, *The Madman and the Butcher*, pp. 98-130; Morton, *When your number's up*, pp. 54-60.

and segregation within the recruitment process.¹⁹ Though Walker could not determine the effectiveness of this, it was clearly different to other Dominions, such as Australia, who rejected most Aboriginals from enlisting into the Australian Imperial Force (AIF).²⁰

Others, such as Paul Maroney, have taken a stronger stance, and defended the decentralised recruitment methods adopted by Hughes. He claims that Brown, Loveridge and Morton were too critical of Hughes, as his approach reflected the values and culture of pre-war Canadian Society, which placed great emphasis on the role and actions of prominent middle-class citizens across local communities. To a certain extent, Maroney is correct. A notable issue of Brown and Loveridge's and Morton's assessments is that they do not consider the impact of broader social influences. Though this reflects the need for a definitive study on recruitment that can offer an overarching, judicial review akin to Simkins' research, Maroney undermines his argument by claiming the questions posed by these historians are irrelevant.²¹ Whilst it is essential to take social precedent into consideration, a critical part of assessing recruitment methods is to evaluate its military effectiveness, considering its sole purpose was to enlist men for the creation and maintenance of military forces overseas.

This represents a much larger divide in the Canadian historiography. As Richard Holt claims, many historians have approached recruitment as a social and imperial, rather than a military, phenomenon.²² Matthew Bray has led this process, claiming that the Canadians initially saw the Great War as a distant, European conflict with little relevance to them. Their role was one of 'limited liability' and subordination to Britain, as a Dominion that was both legally and morally required to assist the Empire. This transformed when the CEF suffered significant casualties at the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915, as it brought a sense of 'immediacy' to the conflict. This 'Canadianisation' of the war effort led to a strong 'English-Canadian patriotic response', which saw a spike in recruitment associations across Canada and the demand for compulsion from the newly created Canadian National Service League. These responses, Bray claimed, demonstrated that Canada was no longer fighting as a

¹⁹ Walker, James, 'Race and Recruitment in World War I: Enlistment of visible minorities in the Canadian Expeditionary Force', *Canadian Historical Review*, 70:1 (1989), pp. 1-26.

²⁰ Winegard, *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions*, pp. 88, 131-135 and 160-162.

²¹ Maroney, Paul, 'The Great Adventure': The context and ideology of recruiting in Ontario, 1914-17', *The Canadian Historical Review*, 77:1 (1996), pp. 62-98.

²² Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 9.

Dominion of the British Empire, as constitutionally required, but 'as a nation and an ally' in their own right.²³

The 'Canadianisation' of the war effort has been expanded upon by other historians. Ian Miller's analysis of the war effort in Toronto offered a localised evaluation of this phenomena and claimed Torontonians saw this as 'their war' from 1914 due to the larger number of men who enlisted in the first contingent. Whilst the Second Battle of Ypres extrapolated their viewpoint onto a national scale, Miller argues that it turned their view of war from a 'great adventure' into a 'great crusade', which required the city to maintain recruitment to, 'make good the sacrifice of so many men'.²⁴ James Wood's analysis of the cultural-military history of the Canadian Militia developed this concept further. Not only did the war revitalise the links between the community and Canadian Militia, which had been essential to recruitment in the pre-war period, but the perceived threat to Canada had reawakened the pre-war citizen soldier tradition in broader society. Specifically, the price of citizenship required a duty to serve in time of war, which led men to rise up and defend the nation.²⁵

Though similar conclusions have been drawn by British historians regarding the spike in recruitment following the retreat from Mons, this focus has undermined a broader social analysis of recruitment in Canada.²⁶ By concentrating on how communities responded to war through social institutions, such as recruitment leagues, historians have failed to analyse this in tandem with the broader recruitment effort. Neither Bray or Wood assessed how this impacted recruitment at a national, regional, and local sphere, or the influence it had on individuals. Though Miller claims 'a great crusade' had begun in Toronto, which led to 60 percent of all eligible Torontonians enlisting, there is little archival evidence to support this.²⁷ None have ascertained the impact this phenomenon had upon the number of Canadian

²³ Bray, Matthew, "Fighting as an Ally: The English-Canadian Patriotic Response to the Great War", *Canadian Historical Review*, 36:2 (1980), pp. 141-168.

²⁴ Miller, Ian, *Our Glory and Our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), pp. 43, 67-105.

²⁵ Wood, *Militia Myths*, pp. 1-5, 225-226 and 230-231.

²⁶ Beckett, 'The nation in arms', p. 7.

²⁷ This statistic needs to be treated with the upmost caution. The recruitment figure is based on everyone who attempted to enlist, whilst the total population of men of military age is derived from creating an average from the 1911 and 1921 census figures. See; Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief*, pp. 67, 93-95 and 105.

born nationals enlisting and, considering they only formed 51.2 percent of the CEF by November 1918, these arguments need modification.²⁸

This trend has undermined a comprehensive analysis of what influenced men to enlist throughout the war. Robert Brown and Steven Loveridge's analysis of provincial recruitment has provided a broad understanding of overarching recruitment trends. For instance, 60 percent of the first contingent were British nationals. Though many were single, of military age, and desirous to assist their nation, many enlisted in Western Canada, which had been hit hardest by economic depression.²⁹ Though able to determine the influence of broad factors, their analysis did not attempt to measure the various influences that affected recruitment at the local and regional level. Both Brown and Loveridge acknowledged this and admitted that the lack of reliable statistics undermined an analysis of this nature.³⁰ Chris Sharpe has added to this debate by rectifying the statistics used by historians, who often used different population figures. Some used the number of males of military age in the 1911 Census, estimated at 1,726,873, whilst Brown and Loveridge used the figure of 1,888,825, which was cited in the *Canada Year Book, 1913*. Others, such as Charles Stacey, referred to the total population, recorded at 7,993,000 in the *Canada Year Book, 1938*. Sharpe has added to this by analysing the regional distribution of 'unnaturalised aliens' across Canada, who could not enlist into the CEF. Though a relatively small population of 190,000, they were concentrated in several regions. This affected the total proportion of available manpower and needed to be considered in any regional recruitment study. For instance, Non-British 'Aliens' formed 32 percent of British Columbia's population, as it attracted immigrants from Asia and Central-South-Eastern Europe.³¹

Jonathan Vance has noted other problems, including the inability to determine a recruit's place of residence. As attestation forms did not ask this until 1915, historians such as Sharpe have used place of enlistment as a proxy for place of residence, which will impact any study of local and regional recruitment. Nevertheless, Vance and a team of research assistants are designing a digitised dataset that records the birth, literacy, residency,

²⁸ Morton, *When your number's up*, pp. 277-279.

²⁹ Brown and Loveridge, 'Unrequited Faith', pp. 66-67.

³⁰ Ibid, pp. 65-68; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 8.

³¹ Harper, Marjory, 'Rhetoric and Reality: British Migration to Canada, 1867-1967', in Buckner, Phillip (ed.), *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 161 and 164; Sharpe, Chris, 'Enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force 1914-1918', *Canadian Military History* 24:1 (2015), pp. 10-23.

occupation, next of kin and place of enlistment of all volunteers and conscripts that joined the CEF. Based on the digitised attestation forms held at the Library and Archives Canada (LAC), they hope to provide researchers with the tools needed to create nuanced analyses of recruitment. Indeed, Vance has already been able to offer some interesting preliminary conclusions on topics such as American recruitment. Based on 20,000 entries, an estimated 10 percent of recruits were Americans who crossed the border to enlist, with many arriving from key localities such as the Niagara Peninsula. This dataset was completed in December 2021 and provides a fantastic resource for future researchers.³²

The lack of research into recruitment patterns is due to the historiographical focus on French Canadians. As a well-established minority group who were accused of resisting recruitment, conscription and the war effort, historians have concentrated their research on explaining their 'reluctance' to enlist. This considers numerous factors, including their deep, isolated ancestral roots in Canada. They had no meaningful relationship with Britain and their traditional French origins meant little after France neglected their cultural relationship for over a century. Others have claimed cultural traditions and locality affected this. French Canadians tended to marry young whilst some have claimed Quebec, their ancestral home, yielded lower recruits due to its (questionable) status as a rural province. The most convincing arguments consider state-sponsored cultural repression and the lack of military representation. Indeed, relations between French and English Canadians broke down after the French language was banned in schools across Ontario in 1912, whilst the only French-Canadian Militia battalion, the 86th Regiment, was disbanded the same year. Combined with the lack of representation in the CEF, with only the 22nd Canadian Battalion recognised as a French speaking unit, recruitment remained limited.³³

³² Vance, Jonathan, 'Provincial Patterns of enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force', *Canadian Military History*, 17:2 (2008), pp. 75-78; Library and Archive Canada, 'Personnel Records of the First World War', <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/search.aspx> [last accessed 22/08/2022].

³³ Armstrong, Elizabeth H., *The Crisis of Quebec, 1914-1918* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1938); Brown, R. Craig and Cook, Ray, *Canada 1896-1921: A nation transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), pp. 252-267; Durflinger, Serge, 'French Canada and Recruitment during the First World War', *Canadian War Museum*, <https://www.warmuseum.ca/learn/dispatches/french-canada-and-recruitment-during-the-first-world-war/#tabs> [last accessed 29/12/2018]; Granatstein, J. L and Hitsman J. M, *Broken Promises: A history of conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977); Morton, Desmond, 'Did the French Canadians cause the Conscription Crisis of 1917?', *Canadian Military History*, 24:1 (2015), pp. 88-99; Sharpe, 'Canadian Expeditionary Force', pp. 14-20.

Jean Martin has challenged this interpretation and claimed that French-Canadian enlistment, usually estimated at 30,000-35,000, was much higher. Historians tend to focus on recruitment in Quebec and, by ignoring French Canadians across Canada, the total number has been substantially underestimated. To challenge this, he created a dataset of all CEF recruits whose name began with B, as it represented roughly 10 percent of all enlistments. By cross examining this against Francophone names, the 1911 Census and a sample of names from the sub-districts of Quebec to gauge their occurrence locally and nationally, Martin estimates that 70,000-75,000 French Canadians enlisted. Of this total, an estimated 34 percent enlisted outside of Quebec and came from large French-Canadian communities in New Brunswick and Ontario. Overall, Martin's research has provided an excellent re-evaluation of French-Canadian representation in the CEF. Though additional research is needed to expand upon his preliminary conclusions, as well as broader research into other social groups, communities and regions across Canada, Martin's work provided an excellent start point to review French-Canadian recruitment in the Great War.³⁴

These loosely connected strands of research are a marked contrast to the British historiography, where historians have produced a rich discourse of interconnected literature regarding recruitment. This was pioneered by Ian Beckett, who argued that the British response to the Great War led it, for the first time in its history, to become a 'nation in arms'. Despite the extensive mobilisation of society in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, which forged a strong national identity and transformed the country into the 'British Armed Nation', Edwardian society had no clear relationship with the armed forces. Although aspects of it were 'militant', as seen by the dominance of evangelical imperialism and the growth of the quasi-military associations, such as the Boy Scouts, there was no clear unity between society and the military. The regular army of 250,000 was not representative of society and relied on the unskilled working class from English cities to fill the ranks. The army was undesirable, and most enlisted due to economic hardship and the 'compulsion of destitution'. Although pressure groups such as the National Service League (NSL) attempted to forge closer links between army and society, it was unsuccessful. Formed in 1902 and consisting of 91,000 members by 1911, the NSL failed to garner support for universal military service, as seen by

³⁴ Martin, Jean, 'Francophile enlistment in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918: The Evidence', *Canadian Military History*, 25:1 (2016), pp. 17-60.

the failure to pass all five parliamentary bills on conscription between 1908 and 1914. This was reinforced by Haldane's failure to reconstitute the Auxiliary forces into a 'real national army' that educated citizens about their duty to defend the state. Territorial Associations, designed to forge closer links between communities and the military through an elective component, were withdrawn due to political resistance. Though the TF was more representative than the regular army, with an estimated eight percent of the population partaking in some form of military training by 1914, its popularity declined after the invasion scare of 1909.³⁵

The Great War was essential to establishing the 'nation in arms' for the first time. Overall, 5,700,000 men served in the British Army, whilst other establishments, such as the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and Volunteer Training Corps, flourished. The estimated 2,500,000 men who enlisted before the introduction of conscription in 1916 has come to symbolise the British 'nation in arms', and Beckett's analysis considered this from a local, regional and national level. Similar to the Canadian historiography, he examined the official and unofficial responses to the war, such as the Parliamentary Recruitment Committee and the various public recruitment leagues created across the country. Yet, he expanded his analysis to consider society's response to the call for recruits. Though recruitment rates indicated an overwhelming positive response, as 15 percent of all enlistments took place in the first two months of war, regional recruitment varied. In order to fully understand why individuals did, or did not, enlist, Beckett evaluated a number of variable factors such as class, occupation, location, age, religion, politics and individual circumstances across a local, regional and national spectrum.³⁶

The key to this was Beckett's ability to incorporate pre-existing literature into an analytical framework that could be used as a model by future historians. For example, he utilised P. E. Dewey and Jay Winter's research on national trends. Both highlighted through government documentation that white-collar workers, such as those in finance and

³⁵ Beckett, 'The nation in arms', pp. 2-7; Colley, Linda, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Yale University Press, 1992); Cookson, J. E., *The British Armed Nation, 1793-1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

³⁶ Beckett, 'The nation in arms', pp. 7-16; Beckett, Ian F. W., Bowman, Timothy and Connelly, Mark, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 99-100 and 134; Douglas, Roy, 'Voluntary Enlistment in the First World War and the Work of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee', *The Journal of Modern History*, 42:4 (1970), pp. 564-585.

commerce, were proportionally more likely to enlist than those in other professions, such as transport. Dewey argued that the average age of each work force had influenced enlistment rates, whilst Winter suggested that the important role played by the working class in protected war-time industries, as well as their relatively poor health, led to lower rates of participation in the military.³⁷ Against this backdrop, he considered localised studies, such as Jack Osbourne's analysis of recruitment in Bristol, which linked high enlistment rates with the mass economic upheaval. 10 percent of the Bristolian workforce lost their job on the outbreak of war and, alongside another 26 percent that were on short time, Osbourne estimated that 90 percent of men made redundant decided to enlist.³⁸ Overall, Beckett's analytical model has established a dominant historiographical trend that has led historians to evaluate how different regions, communities and individuals responded to, and participated in, the war effort. It demonstrated a rich set of interpretations that can be used to contrast local and regional factors against one another, in light of national trends, to explain how Britain became a 'nation in arms'.³⁹

³⁷ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 103; Dewey, P. E, 'Military recruiting and the British Labour Force during the First World War', *Historical Journal*, 27 (1984), pp. 199-224; Winter, Jay, 'Army and society: the demographic context', in Beckett, Ian F. W. and Simpson, Keith (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A Social study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 193-210; Winter, Jay, 'Britain's lost generation of the First World War', *Population Studies*, 31:3 (1977), pp. 543-545.

³⁸ Beckett, 'The nation in arms', pp. 9-10; Osbourne, John, *The Voluntary Recruiting Movement in Britain, 1914-1916* (London: Garland, 1982), pp. 116-118.

³⁹ Beckett, John, 'Patriotism in Nottinghamshire: Challenging the Unconvinced, 1914-1917', *Midland History*, 39:2 (2014), pp. 185-201; Bowman, Timothy, Butler, William and Wheatley, Michael, *The Disparity of Sacrifice: Irish Recruitment to the British Armed Forces, 1914-1918* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020); Dooley, Thomas P., *Irishmen or English Soldiers? The times and world of a southern Catholic Irish man (1876-1916) enlisting in the British army during the First World War* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995); Fitzpatrick, David, 'The Logic of Collective Sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army, 1914-1918', *The Historical Journal*, 38:4 (1995), pp. 1017-1030; Hughes, Clive, 'The New Armies', in Beckett, Ian F. W. and Simpson, Keith (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A Social study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 116-120; Hartigan, John, 'Volunteering in the First World War: the Birmingham Experience, August 1914 – May 1915', *Midland History*, 24:1 (1999), pp. 167-186; Hancock, Simon, 'The Social Impact of the First World War in Pembrokeshire' (Cardiff University PhD Thesis, 2015); Mercer, Eric, 'For King, Country and a Shilling a Day: Belfast Recruiting Patterns in the Great War', *History Ireland*, 11:4 (2003), pp. 29-33; Pennell, Catriona, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 147-162; Purseigle, Pierre, 'Beyond and below the nations: towards a comparative history of local communities of war', in Macleod, Jenny and Purseigle, Pierre (eds), *Uncovered Fields: Perspective in First World War Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 112-118; Spiers, Edward M., 'Voluntary Recruiting in Yorkshire, 1914-1915', *Northern History*, 52:2 (2015), pp. 295-313; Watt, Patrick, 'Manpower, Myth and Memory: Analysing Scotland's Military Contribution to the Great War', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 39:1 (2019), pp. 75-100; White, 'Volunteerism and Early Recruitment in Devonshire', pp. 641-666; Young, Derek Rutherford, 'Voluntary recruitment in Scotland, 1914- 1916' (University of Glasgow PhD Thesis, 2002).

In comparison to the breadth and depth of both British and Canadian research, Australian historiography is scarce. As Joan Beaumont speculates, where are the array of academic studies that evaluate the socio-economic composition of the AIF, like those produced by Beckett?⁴⁰ Although this comment was made 27 years ago, little progress has been made in the broader sphere of manpower and only a handful of historians have tackled this topic. At the forefront is L. L. Robson's analysis of recruitment and how it affected the socio-economic composition of the AIF. Robson broke recruitment down into three key phases between 1914 and 1918; uncoordinated recruitment from August 1914 to June 1915, coordinated recruitment between July 1915 and August 1916, and the remainder of the war, specifically September 1916 to November 1918, which saw two attempts to pass conscription through referenda. Though simplistic, Robson established national and regional trends. For instance, the sharp decline in recruitment between the second and third phases was due to the polarising conscription debates. Recruitment originally plateaued but it sharply declined after the failure to pass either conscription referenda, as it bitterly divided Australian society and undermined support in the war effort. At the state level, Victoria was above the national average in the first period, but significantly below in the last. This, Robson claims, was due to Victoria's efforts to centralise recruitment in 1915, which was so successful that it had 'bled them white' by 1918.⁴¹

Robson also established the socio-economic composition of the AIF through age, religion and occupation. This helped to debunk myths, such as the contemporary opinion that Catholics had resisted recruitment and the conscription plebiscites after 1916 due to the Easter Rising in Ireland. Robson's statistics firmly rejects this premise and, in fact, shows that the only religious group to witness a decline in recruitment were Methodists.⁴² Though Jeffrey Grey claims that Robson's sample size of 2,085, or 0.5 percent of all enlisted soldiers, was too small to hold significant weight, as a larger sample would have yielded more definitive results, there are more pressing concerns about his analysis.⁴³ Specifically, Robson used this data to

⁴⁰ Beaumont, Joan, 'introduction', in Beaumont, Joan (ed.), *Australia's War, 1914-1918* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1995), p. XXI.

⁴¹ Robson, L. L., 'The Origin and Character of the first A.I.F, 1914-1918: Some statistical evidence', *Australian Historical Studies*, 15:61 (1973), pp. 737-740.

⁴² Ibid, p. 741.

⁴³ Beaumont, Joan, 'Australia's War', in Beaumont, Joan (ed.) *Australia's War, 1914-1918* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1995), p. 7; Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p. 282.

deconstruct aspects of the Anzac Legend, which had been propagated by the Australian official historian, Charles Bean, since 1915. His work portrayed a strong nationalistic image of the Australian soldier, which explained how their unique characteristics made them excellent soldiers. Derived from their rugged lifestyle in the Australian outback, their prowess became apparent on the shores of Gallipoli and, through their actions, they were able to discover an 'Australian' nation and consciousness.⁴⁴ Robson rightly asserted that this imagery was statistically unfounded, as 25 percent of recruits in the first phase of recruitment were British born and, therefore, were unlikely to have been moulded by rural traditions. Working class labourers from urban localities also formed the largest social group at 22 percent and, for Robson, Bean and his Anzac Legend amounted to a calculated misrepresentation of Australia and Australians during the Great War.⁴⁵

Though Robson has been acknowledged for being both the first historian to critically assess Bean's arguments and for establishing 'an academic tradition of challenging the Anzac Canon', Beaumont correctly notes that Robson's focus was too narrow.⁴⁶ He was unable to draw wider conclusions regarding the relationship between Australian Society and the AIF, as he did not consider how recruitment reflected changes in other communities and social groups. Robson's work, therefore, could only provide a limited snapshot of the AIF and, despite its importance within the historiography, does not compare with its British and Canadian counterparts.⁴⁷

This has been somewhat remedied by John McQuilton, who has evaluated the response to war in rural Australia. He argues that, due to the level of urbanisation in Australia, rural communities are often overlooked in social analysis. Therefore, his research on North-East Victoria has been used to analyse the broader experience of rural Australia in the Great War. It covers their response to war and the unique challenges it faced, including the

⁴⁴ Bean, Charles (ed.), *The Anzac Book* (London: Cassell, 1916); Holbrook, Carolyn, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Bibliography* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2014), pp. 33-34; Kent, David A., 'The Anzac book and the Anzac legend: C.E.W. Bean as editor and image-maker', *Historical Studies*, 21 (1985), pp. 376-390; Robson, 'Character of the first A.I.F.', pp. 737-738; Thomson, Alistair, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 46-72.

⁴⁵ Robson, 'Character of the first A.I.F.', pp. 743-749.

⁴⁶ Holbrook, *Anzac*, p. 103; Simkins, Peter, 'Everyman at War: Recent Interpretations of the Front-Line Experience' in Bond, Brian (ed.), *The First World War and Military History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 306-308; Ziino, Bart, 'First World War in Australian History', *Australian Historical Studies*, 47:1 (2016), pp. 120-122.

⁴⁷ Beaumont, 'Australia's War', pp. 7-8.

establishment of patriotic funds and farewell parades organised to wish ‘the boys’ luck on their long march to urban recruitment centres.⁴⁸ Not only is his analysis the only piece of modern scholarship comparable to those produced in Britain and Canada, but he expands upon Michael McKernan’s brief argument that rural Australia experienced a ‘different war’. The latter argued that there were greater social and economic pressures than those exerted in towns and cities, as most rural localities were small, close knitted communities. Though the increased demand for agricultural goods from Britain led to fears over skilled labour, the populace knew each of their neighbour’s circumstances and were vocal about any individual they deemed to be shirking their duty.⁴⁹

To validate this, McQuilton created a comprehensive breakdown of the recruitment effort in North-East Victoria, as well as a socio-economic breakdown of recruits, to compare to Robson’s analysis. Overall, recruitment in North-East Victoria was below the national average in 1915, but then overtook it by ten percent in 1916. This was due to different levels of recruitment across sub-regions, which was influenced by the occupational trade of each community. For instance, mining communities faced economic hardship from 1914 as mines were shut, whilst agrarian communities, long suffering from drought, had a good weather and an increase demand for goods. As a result, mining communities that faced economic hardship enlisted in higher numbers throughout 1915, whilst the spike in agrarian communities only came after the successful harvest of 1916. Combined with the rest of McQuilton’s analysis, which covered religion, communities and women, he was able to verify McKernan’s argument that rural Australia experienced their own war.⁵⁰

The only drawback to McQuilton’s analytical framework is its individuality. Although he used Robson’s model for a national comparison, more studies are needed to ascertain the precise uniqueness of North-East Victoria’s rural community against other settlements and regions across Australia. Furthermore, Robson’s model cannot continue to be used as proxy for an urban response to war, as done by McQuilton. Although urban populations influenced

⁴⁸ McQuilton, John, *Rural Australia and the Great War: From Tarrawingee to Tangambalanga* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997), pp. 2, 23-49.

⁴⁹ McKernan, Michael, *The Australian People and the Great War* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1980), pp. 181-200.

⁵⁰ McQuilton, John, ‘Enlistment for the First World War in rural Australia: the case of North-Eastern Victoria, 1914-1918’, *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, 33 (2000), <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/journal/j33/mcquilton> [last accessed 02/01/2019].

the model created by Robson, there were undoubtedly significant differences between other urbanised communities and regions, as demonstrated by Dale Blair's analysis of recruitment for the 1st Australian Battalion in Sydney. Further research, in a model similar to one established by Beckett, is therefore needed to fully quantify and understand McQuilton's excellent analysis.⁵¹

The limited discussion of manpower within the historiography can, to some degree, be attributed to Charles Bean and the influence he wielded as the official historian. Though historians are still debating Bean's influence over the creation and dissemination of the 'Anzac Legend' in Australian society, he has influenced the scope and methodology of many academic and popular studies.⁵² Unlike his counterparts in Britain and Canada, Bean dispensed with a top-down analysis of war in order to focus his narrative upon the actions of junior officers and other ranks. Coined the 'everyman at war' approach by Peter Simkins, Bean chronicled the soldiers' experience through a tactical and operational lens. It was devoid of broader context and interspersed with detailed accounts of individuals and their exploits, as they encapsulated the 'Anzac Legend'.⁵³

Even though this developed in Britain and Canada from the 1960s, Australian historians have focused their analysis on the soldier and his experience.⁵⁴ For example, Bill Gammage's *The Broken Years* was an influential text that utilised 1,000 letters and diaries from 272 veterans to provide an overview of the Great War. Despite the warnings he posed in his appendix about the potential pitfalls his methodology presented, his work digressed from an analysis into an emotional narrative. He did not provide a broad analysis of recruitment and, as a result, simply gave a selection of reasons that may have influenced men to enlist. Whilst Bart Ziino's analysis of the Australian Historiography challenges this interpretation, as he considers Gammage as the original proponent of the 'everyman at war' approach in Australia, the latter's methodology and heartfelt acknowledgment to Bean's

⁵¹ Blair, Dale, *Dinkum Diggers: An Australian Battalion at War* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), pp. 17-36.

⁵² Holbrook, *Anzac*, pp. 62-81.

⁵³ Simkins, 'Everyman at war' pp. 290-292, 296 and 306-308.

⁵⁴ Beaumont, 'Introduction', pp. XIX-XX; Grey, Jeffrey, 'Cuckoo in the Nest? Australian Military Historiography: The State of the Field', *History Compass*, 6:2 (2008), pp. 455-458; McKernan, M., 'Writing about War' in McKernan, M. and Browne, M. (eds), *Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace* (Canberra: Allen and Unwin, 1988), pp. 13-20.

work as, 'among the greatest contributions yet made to the history of Australia', implies otherwise.⁵⁵ Gammage's work has been duplicated numerous times since. Elena Gover and John Williams have added some diversity to this by assessing the experience of German and Russian immigrants respectively, but the argument follows similar lines adopted by Gammage.⁵⁶ Though important, this focus has led to the topic of manpower being reduced to an assessment of motivations for enlistment. Analyses rarely consider the web of pull and push factors that fell across Australian society at different times and, as a result, additional research is needed to fully consider why men enlisted into the AIF.⁵⁷

The impact this has had is evident when surveying the lack of research into other aspects of manpower, including the strategic distribution of men and the creation and expansion of the AIF from a small, part-time militia force. L. L. Robson's *The First A.I.F* is the only piece to assess recruitment for the AIF and, even then, does not touch upon the topics noted above. Although it covers the transformation of the recruitment effort from the 'business as usual' approach under the Labour Government to a centralised approach under the new Prime Minister, William 'Billy' Hughes, from October 1915, it was a social and political history of Australian society.⁵⁸ Though Jeffrey Grey's analysis of the Australian army skirted the complexities of creating an expeditionary force, recent work by Jean Bou, Peter Dennis, Christopher Pugsley and John Connor has acknowledged this.⁵⁹ Bou and Dennis have provided a brief overview of manpower, claiming that the creation of the AIF was beset with endless troubles, as it lacked instructors, equipment and experienced officers. They, Pugsley, and most recently Connor, who analysed the career of the longest serving Minister for Defence,

⁵⁵ Gammage, Bill, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), pp. V-VI and XIII-XVII; Ziino, 'First World War in Australian History', p. 121.

⁵⁶ Gover, Elena, *Russian Anzacs in Australian history* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2005); Williams, John F., *German Anzacs and the First World War* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2003).

⁵⁷ Dawes, J. N. I and Robson, L. L., *Citizen to Soldier: Australia before the Great War: Recollections of Members of the First A.I.F.* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977); Forrest, Alison, "Milling Around Outside the Town-Hall': motivations for enlistment of the first AIF", *Melbourne Historical Journal*, 18 (1987), pp. 97-111; Welborn, Suzanne, *Lords of Death: A People, A Place, A legend* (Perth: Fremantle Arts Centre, 1982); White, Richard, 'Motives for Joining up: Self-sacrifice, self-interest and social-class, 1914-18', *Australian War Memorial Journal*, 9 (1986), pp. 3-16; Wise, Nathan, 'Working Class Men's Experiences with Work in the Australian Imperial Force during the Great War' (University of New South Wales PhD Thesis, 2007); Ziino, Bart, 'Enlistment and Non-enlistment in Wartime Australia: Responses to the 1916 Call to Arms Appeal', *Australian Historical Studies*, 41:2 (2010), pp. 217-232.

⁵⁸ Robson, L. L., *The First A.I.F.: A study of Its Recruitment, 1914-1918* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1970).

⁵⁹ Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, pp. 80-82.

Sir George Foster Pearce, have considered the government's failure to create a coherent manpower policy. The government, along with the various General Officers Commanding (GOC) AIF between 1914 and 1918, allowed the AIF to expand above its manpower ceiling. It suffered from acute manpower shortages in 1918 and, without any direction from its military or political leaders, nearly collapsed under the weight of its own casualties. Though an important contribution, these analyses are brief and, bar Bou's recent study, does not form the core of their research.⁶⁰

This stands in contrast to the historiography dedicated to creation and development of Australia's citizen soldiers from the early Victorian period to the Citizen Militia Force (CMF), which was created upon federation in 1901. Unlike the AIF, the historiography records the divergent domestic and imperial opinions on Imperial defence, the proposed schemes for national defence and the eventual difficulties of introducing and creating the CMF through compulsion. Combined with an analysis of military expertise, technology and the rivalry posed by the newly formed Royal Australian Navy, it is clear that the AIF needs similar attention.⁶¹ As Jeffrey Grey argues, historians have, seemingly, 'gone to great lengths to avoid serious discussion of the central business of war, the management of organised violence.'⁶²

Conscription and the Strategic Distribution of Manpower

The inability to introduce conscription in 1916 and 1917 has dominated Australian historiography and, similar to Bean's influence, diverted attention away from broader manpower policies. Other than Ireland and South Africa, Australia remained the only self-governing country in the British Empire where conscription was not enforced. The Australian government on two occasions, once in October 1916 and again in December 1917, attempted

⁶⁰ Bou, Jean, 'The Government That Could Not Say No and Australia's Military Effort, 1914-1918', in Delaney, Douglas E., Frost, Mark and Brown, Andrew L. (eds), *Manpower and the Armies of the British Empire in the Two World Wars* (London: Cornell University Press, 2021), pp. 11-27; Bou, Jean and Dennis, Peter, *The Australian Imperial Force* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 4-11 and 60-70; Connor, John, *Anzac and Empire: George Foster Pearce and the Foundation of Australian Defence* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 60-83 and 101-126; Pugsley, *The Anzac Experience*, pp. 253-256, 267 and 272-274.

⁶¹ Coulthard-Clark, C. D., 'Formation of the Australian Armed Services, 1901-1914', in McKernan, M. and Browne, M. (eds), *Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace* (Canberra: Allen and Unwin, 1988), pp. 121-143; Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, pp. 5-79; Marmion, Bob, 'Australia', in Beckett, Ian F. W. (ed.), *Citizen Soldiers and the British Empire, 1837-1902* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), pp. 57-78; Palazzo, Albert, *The Australian Army: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 1-61; Tanner, Thomas W., *Compulsory Citizen Soldiers* (Sydney: Alternative Publishing Co-operative, 1980); Wilcox, Craig, *For Hearths and Homes: Citizen Soldiering in Australia 1854-1945* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin 1998), pp. 47-80.

⁶² Grey, 'Cuckoo's Nest', pp. 455.

to enforce compulsion through a national referendum. Although both times saw a small marginal victory for the 'no' vote, it is recorded as a devastating experience for Australian society. Although Ken Inglis lambasted historians in 1964 for analysing conscription separately to the war effort, academics have continued to view compulsion through a social and political prism.⁶³ Robson's analysis demonstrates this point, as it provided an emotional narrative that focused on how the referendums divided society, destroyed the labour party and, 'shattered the spirit of optimism, virtual unanimity and cocky pride with which the new Commonwealth entered the war.'⁶⁴ He provided no account of why compulsion was proposed and, instead, focused upon centres of 'resistance', such as Catholicism and organised labour. His analysis, however, was clearly influenced by contemporary events. Robson, as well as other left-wing historians, were witnessing their own conscription crisis, when Robert Menzies' Liberal government introduced compulsion for Vietnam in 1964. The popular resistance they witnessed in society mirrored those from 1916 and 1917 and led to a growing anti-war movement, which led to a distorted view of Australia's first conscription crisis.⁶⁵

This has been moderated in recent years, though interpretation continues to focus upon those who opposed it, including Catholics and their outspoken leader, the Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix.⁶⁶ John McQuilton has cut across this divide by analysing exemption applications at a tribunal in North-East Victoria in September 1916. Confident of a 'yes' vote in the upcoming referendum, the Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, had called up all single and childless widowers from 21 to 35 for 'home service'. Though the system quickly lapsed, McQuilton's analysis demonstrated widespread rural resistance, with 556 farmers applying for exemption. Though indifferent about conscription itself, these men went onto form a farmer's anti-conscription league after the tribunal rejected all their applications for exemption. It demonstrated rural resistance and identified how localised issues influenced the national referendum.⁶⁷ It has not, however, resolved the broader disconnect between

⁶³ Ziino, 'First World War in Australian History', pp. 123-124.

⁶⁴ Robson, *The First A.I.F.*, pp. 1-4, 77-132.

⁶⁵ Holbrook, *Anzac*, pp. 63-64; Inglis, Ken, 'Conscription in Peace and War, 1911-1945' in Forward, Roy and Reece, Bob (eds), *Conscription in Australia* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1968), pp. 23-42; Wertheim, Peter, 'Foreword', in Forward, Roy and Reece, Bob (eds), *Conscription in Australia* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1968), pp. IX-XII; Ziino, 'First World War in Australian History', pp. 123-126.

⁶⁶ Ziino, 'First World War in Australian History', p. 126.

⁶⁷ McQuilton, John, 'Doing the 'Back Block Boy Some Good': The Exemption Court Hearings in North-East Victoria, 1916', *Australian Historical Studies*, 31:115 (2000), pp. 237-251.

conscription and the war effort. Additional research is needed and until recruitment, conscription and reinforcement policies are viewed in connection to one another, it is impossible to gauge how the government viewed the growing manpower crisis.

The Canadian historiography has, until recently, mirrored Australia's emotional response to conscription. J. L. Granatstein and J. M. Hitsman's book provides an overarching view of conscription in Canada, ranging from the 18th century to the Cold War. Akin to their Australian counterparts, they view conscription as a great tragedy that divided society and undermined social cohesion. Overall, their argument assesses a variety of military, social and political aspects and can be distilled into two arguments. Firstly, they criticise the Canadian Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden, for his failure to implement a coherent manpower policy until 1917. He allowed Samuel Hughes to pursue indiscriminate recruitment and, at times, exacerbated it by political intervention. For example, he expanded the legal limit of the military forces to 500,000 in January 1916 to demonstrate, at home and abroad, Canada's commitment to the British Empire. Though useful, it was made against the advice of the Canadian CGS, Lieutenant-General Sir Willoughby Gwatkin, who repeatedly warned about the difficulties of sustaining such a large army. Combined with the lack of forethought on other manpower demands, including agriculture and industry, Borden's actions undermined the creation of a rationalised manpower policy until early 1917.⁶⁸

His mistakes, according to Granatstein and Hitsman, led to compulsion. Both decried it as pointless, as Canada's contribution to the imperial war effort, no matter how large, 'would have been the same if there had never been a Canadian at the front'. Though a strong analysis, their conclusion is misleading, as it suggests that the Canadian contribution to the imperial war effort was negligible. It underestimates the influence of Hughes, at least initially, on recruitment, and indicates the mistakes made by Borden were unique. Yet, considering they were repeated by other ministers across the British Empire, including Sir George Pearce, Lord Kitchener and, to some extent, Sir James Allen, in Australia, Britain and New Zealand respectively, this critique needs moderation.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, pp. 34-46.

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 264 and 266; Baker, Paul, *For King and Country: New Zealanders, Conscription and the Great War* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988); Connor, *Anzac and Empire*; Crawford, John, "New Zealand is being bled to death': The Formation, Operations and Disbandment of the Fourth Brigade', in Crawford, John and

The second part of their argument focuses on the introduction of the Military Service Act from August 1917, the exemption process through local tribunals, and what conscription achieved. The act divided men into six categories, based on age and marital status. Class I, composed of single men or childless widowers aged over 20 and born before 1883, were the only class called up in October 1917, as results were limited. Based on the official history, 379,629 out of 401,882 men applied for exemption and, by November 1918, only 99,651 and 24,000 men enlisted into, and subsequently served with, the CEF, respectively. They sensibly argue that the broad criteria of exemptions, including 'essential occupation', enabled most to avoid service, whilst the layers of appeal courts created congestion. The final appeal tribunal was a one-man panel consisting of Justice Lyman Duff of the Supreme Court and, by May 1918, he had 150,000 cases to review. Even though the government cancelled all exemptions in April 1918 after the German Spring Offensive, it produced relatively few recruits.⁷⁰

Though correct to label the act as unsystematic, there are two points of contention within their argument. Firstly, they ignore the apparent levels of social resistance across Canada and, instead, focus on French Canada. Conscription, they claim, was disastrous as it divided French Canadians from their compatriots and fostered mistrust in the country. Indeed, the 1918 Easter Weekend riots in Quebec, which saw French Canadians oppose the harsh crack down on suspected defaulters, led to widespread social division, the repeal of *Habeas Corpus* and the deaths of four civilian and five soldiers.⁷¹ The significance of this should not be understated, as it had a significant impact upon Canadian mobilisation in the Second World War, but Granatstein and Hitsman focus upon this at the expense of the widespread, peaceful resistance evident within their statistics.⁷² Although they discuss the farmers' backlash against all exemptions being withdrawn, it is limited and isolated.⁷³ This has been moderated by Andrew Theobald's analysis of conscription in New Brunswick, where he considers resistance from farmers and, more broadly, the urban and rural divide over compulsion. Combined with an evaluation of the Arcadian French-Canadian population, who

McGibbon, Ian (eds), *New Zealand's Great War: New Zealand, The Allies and the First World War* (Auckland: Exisle, 2007), pp. 251-264; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*.

⁷⁰ Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, pp. 85-93 and 95.

⁷¹ Ibid, pp. 25-31, 39-42, 44-46, 67-70, 87 and 91-94.

⁷² Fennell, Jonathan, *Fighting the People's War: The British and Commonwealth Armies and the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 69-72.

⁷³ Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, pp. 91-92.

were far more supportive of the war effort, he provides a nuanced understanding of French Canadians and, more broadly, national resistance to conscription.⁷⁴

Granatstein and Hitsman have also dismissed the impact of the act, claiming the political and social upheaval it caused was not worth the 24,000 reinforcements it generated.⁷⁵ Yet, conscripts were vital for sustaining the CEF throughout 1918. As Patrick Dennis argues, conscription allowed the GOC Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie, to preserve the CEF at full strength as the imperial army contracted. He expanded the infantry and supporting arms as the BEF reduced each brigade by one battalion and had less pressure to husband manpower throughout the Hundred Days Offensive. This allowed Currie to take calculated risks and though he made mistakes, such as committing the exhausted 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions to the Battle of the Scarpe on 28th August 1918, conscription enabled him to maintain a high operational tempo.⁷⁶ Granatstein has, however, reevaluated his argument in recent years and acknowledged the importance of conscription. As he notes, it helped sustain the CEF through the Hundred Days Offensive and, looking beyond the unexpected armistice in November 1918, secured manpower for 1919.⁷⁷

Conscription in the British historiography is a relatively unexplored topic. Though 2,504,183 men, representing 50.3 percent of all enlistments, were conscripted, historians have almost exclusively focused on recruitment.⁷⁸ Coined the 'unknown army' by Beckett, most historians simply trace the introduction of conscription through the decline of the voluntary model, symbolised by the failure of the Derby scheme to enlist sufficient men between October and December 1915.⁷⁹ Initially introduced in January, the Military Service Act, 1916, which enlisted all single men and childless widowers between 18 and 41, was quickly superseded in May by the Military Service Act (No. 2), 1916. It extended conscription to all men of the same age and was replaced throughout 1917 and 1918 as the manpower

⁷⁴ Theobald, Andrew, *The Bitter Harvest of War: New Brunswick and the Conscription Crisis of 1917* (Fredericton: Goose Lane, 2008), pp. 51-99.

⁷⁵ Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, pp. 269.

⁷⁶ Patrick, Dennis, *Reluctant Warriors: Canadian Conscripts and the Great War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2017), pp. 59-61, 98-99 and 224-225.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. XI; Granatstein, J. L, 'Conscription in the Great War', in Mackenzie, David (ed.), *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp.73-74.

⁷⁸ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 96.

⁷⁹ Beckett, Ian. F. W., 'The Real Unknown Army: British Conscripts, 1916-1919' in Becker, Jean-Jacques and Audoin-Rouzeau, Stéphane (eds.), *Les sociétés européennes et la guerre de 1914-1918* (Nanterre: Université Paris-X Nanterre, 1990), p. 339.

crisis deepened. Though reference is usually made to the Military Service Act, 1918, and Military Service (no.2) Act, 1918, as it formed a key response to the German Spring Offensive, most research fails to comment upon how it was implemented and whether it was effective. Some, such as Peter Simkins, consider how it eroded the distinctive identity of the regular, Territorial and New Army units, whilst others have focused on minorities that resisted compulsion, such as conscientious objectors.⁸⁰

James McDermott's and David Littlewood's analysis of Military Service Tribunals in the UK has redressed some of these gaps. Both investigate the composition and operations of tribunals, as well as the official and unofficial policies that guided them throughout the Great War. McDermott analyses the inconsistencies that emerged between tribunals and how, without any guidance from government regarding its ambiguous legislation, they formed their own interpretations. For example, tribunals adopted different definitions of what constituted an 'indispensable man', which often reflected 'localist concerns' due to its composition of dignitaries who had connections to local communities and their economies. In Northamptonshire, where agriculture and the boot trade were deemed essential industries, tribunals often ignored instructions from the Local Government Board regarding these industries and, 'developed robust policies that placed them in direct confrontation with recruiting officers and their representatives.'⁸¹ Littlewood has added to this by comparing tribunals to Military Boards in New Zealand, whose decision to follow the British experience made it an ideal point of comparison. Though similar, as, 'they included roughly similar grounds of appeal within its Military Service Act', there were clear differences, including the government's decision to achieve uniformity of decision through centralised control of military boards.⁸²

⁸⁰ Ibid, pp. 342-343; Beckett, 'The nation in arms', pp. 12-14; Bet-El, Ilana R., *Conscripts: Lost Legions of the Great War* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999); Bet-El, Ilana R., 'Experience into Identity: The Writings of British Conscript Soldiers, 1916-1918' (University College London PhD Thesis, 1991); Littlewood, David, *Military Service Tribunals and Boards in the Great War: Determining the Date of Britain's and New Zealand's Conscripts* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 1; Simkins, Peter, 'The Four Armies, 1914-1918' in Chandler, David. G and Beckett, Ian F. W. (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 235.

⁸¹ Littlewood, *Military Service Tribunals and Boards*, pp. 1-7; McDermott, James, *British Military Service Tribunals, 1916-1918: 'a very much abused body of men'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp. 1-8.

Keith Grieves' *The Politics of Manpower* offers the most comprehensive analysis of British manpower policy, claiming the government failed to create a rationalised manpower strategy that balanced the needs of industry and the armed forces until 1918. Before, the government had avoided key decisions and continuously referred the problem of manpower to powerless *ad hoc* bodies, which prevented the creation of any centralised policy. The supply and allocation of men depended, 'on bi-lateral agreements which were reached between autonomous 'employing' departments' and the army, who all defended their pre-existing manpower resources and competed for future requirements. This was only resolved when the Ministry of National Service (MNS) was created under Sir Auckland Geddes and, even then, the Royal Navy, air services, ship building, aircraft and tank production and the provision of raw materials were prioritised above the army for manpower.⁸³

This interpretation is important for two reasons. Firstly, Grieves analyses the strategic allocation of manpower as part of the broader development in civil-military relations between the government and armed forces. Instead of focusing on key individuals and possible personality clashes in government, as done by R. J. Q. Adams, Philip P. Poirier and David Woodward, Grieves breaks down the government's attempt to rationalise manpower through administrative and political innovations.⁸⁴ Through this, he was able to show how manpower policies developed across successive governments and how key events influenced this. For example, the creation of the Manpower Distribution Board in August 1916 represented a crucial step towards effective manpower management, as it was a clear break from previous attempts by the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, to respond to specific, and often isolated, issues. Though it failed to craft any clear policy, as the body lacked the expertise and executive power to formulate long term manpower plans, Grieves claims it led to future developments, including the MNS.⁸⁵

Adding to John Turner's broader political history, which considers the difficulties of party politics and governance in war, Grieves has been able to challenge the interpretation

⁸³ TNA, CAB27/14, Cabinet Committee on Manpower report, March 1918; Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower*, p. 208.

⁸⁴ Ibid, pp. 1-5; Adams, R. J. Q and Poirier, Philip, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900-1918* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987); Beckett, Ian F. W., 'Frocks and Brasshats', in Bond, Brian (ed.), *The First World War and British Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 89-112; Woodward, David, *Lloyd George and the Generals* (Newark: Delaware University Press, 1983).

⁸⁵ Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower*, pp. 37, 40-60 and 203.

that David Lloyd George, upon becoming Prime Minister in December 1916, transformed the government's 'business as usual' approach to war. This is evident when assessing the failure of Neville Chamberlain to create an overarching manpower policy as Director-General of National Service in 1917. Although his industrial army concept was flawed, as its grandiose nature was undermined by insufficient detail on labour, national priorities and industrial requirements, Lloyd George offered little advice and allowed Chamberlain to formulate policy in isolation. He was denied a ministerial position and excluded from several cabinet debates on manpower, which undermined his authority. As a result, Lloyd George and his government failed to create a coherent manpower policy and, instead, continued Asquith's legacy of 'business as usual' until 1918.⁸⁶

The breadth and depth of historiography in Australia, Britain and Canada has yet to be replicated in New Zealand. Paul Baker's analysis of conscription remains one of the few texts wholly dedicated to manpower in the Great War, though David Littlewood, as mentioned above, has provided an invaluable insight into military boards. Steven Loveridge and Steven Marti have recently added elements to this debate by analysing cultural and voluntary mobilisation in New Zealand, but their broader analyses skirt the topic of manpower.⁸⁷ As John Crawford argues, the limited research into manpower and the Great War is due to the national significance of the Second World War.⁸⁸

Nevertheless, Baker's research has provided a concise overview of conscription in New Zealand. His investigation focuses on how societal pressures, and the popular belief in 'equality of sacrifice', led to grassroots organisations advocating compulsion across New Zealand once recruitment had begun to wane. He analyses the cultural and social influences of the two major movements, the 'tolerants' and 'intolerants', who agreed men were 'shirking' their duty as citizens to defend New Zealand. To achieve an 'equality of sacrifice' however, the tolerants and intolerants advocated the voluntary and compulsion model of

⁸⁶ Ibid, pp. 83-86, 90-114, 173-175 and 204; Turner, John, *British Politics and the Great War: Coalition and Conflict 1915-1918* (London: Yale University Press, 1992).

⁸⁷ Baker, *For King and Country*; Littlewood, *Military Service Tribunals and Boards*; Loveridge, Steven, *Calls to Arms: New Zealand Society and Commitment to the Great War* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2014); Marti, Steve, *For Home and Empire: Voluntary Mobilization in Australia, Canada and New Zealand during the Great War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2019).

⁸⁸ Crawford, John and McGibbon, Ian, 'Introduction', in Crawford, John and McGibbon, Ian (eds), *New Zealand's Great War: New Zealand, the Allies and the First World War* (Auckland: Exisle, 2007), pp. 16-17.

enlistment, respectively. The former wished to modify recruitment policies and provide greater support to men who volunteered, as the current system of enlisting for a future reinforcement draft was problematic. Though practical for maintaining the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF) overseas, it deterred men from enlisting and had an economic impact on those that had already left their jobs to enlist. Conversely, intolerants doubted that men who had yet to enlist would do so in the future. Though the government were aware of this rift and wished to introduce compulsion in 1915, they were concerned about organised labour and their response to compulsion.⁸⁹

Baker's analysis of cultural constructs has somewhat simplified New Zealand's shift towards, and adoption of, the Military Service Act, 1916, as he attempts to define two broad schools of thought. He analysed contemporary opinion regarding 'shirkers' through newspapers and private documentation and includes descriptions of different groups of men, such as the 'hooray tribe', who shouted loudly at rallies but did not enlist. Though this drove grassroots organisations towards the notion of 'equality of sacrifice', he has provided little detail about recruitment itself. There is no detailed breakdown of recruitment across different social groups, communities, and regions in New Zealand, and focuses too much on vocal points of peripheral resistance, including organised labour and pacifists.⁹⁰ His limited analysis of recruitment in rural communities demonstrates this. Though his argument echoes many of the points raised by John McQuilton's assessment of rural Australia, he focuses on how farming communities understood their contribution to the war effort. With brief reference to recruitment figures, communities such as Te Awamutu and Waipu had sent 'every young man', and those that remained were needed to maintain production, which led to a drop in rural enlistment. Though insightful, his argument that rural military districts were responsible for 75 and 92 percent of recruitment shortages in June and September 1916 are contentious. He provides no reference about where this information came from and fails to use key sources, such as recruitment targets and the 1911 Census, to calculate rural mobilisation.⁹¹

Baker's analysis of conscription legislation and mechanisms is thorough. New Zealand was unique in the British Empire for creating a conscription system that combined the

⁸⁹ Baker, *For King and Country*, pp. 32-42 and 104.

⁹⁰ Ibid, pp. 46-53 and 64-78.

⁹¹ Ibid, pp. 55.

voluntary principle with means of compulsion and, unlike Britain and Canada, did not mobilise all available manpower. Instead, men were called up to fill monthly quotas that were calculated in relation to wastage overseas. Men, however, were encouraged to enlist for future drafts and any gaps were to be filled through a ballot, reminiscent to the system run in Britain throughout the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars between 1793 and 1815. Men were drawn at random from two broad groups, called the First and Second Division. The first group comprised of single men, widowers without children and men married after May 1915, whilst the second including all other eligible males who could only be called up once the first group had been completely exhausted. This was, in effect, a compromise between the tolerants and intolerants, which politically defused tensions in society. Although the voluntary element was restricted to the Second Division and men turning 20 by June 1917, the fact that it persisted for so long is a testament to the success of the system. In November 1916, when the first ballot was drawn, volunteers comprised 70 percent of the monthly quota, whilst in August 1917 they made up 40 percent of the total. As Baker claims, the government's success was due to observing Britain's mistakes in the Derby Scheme and the Military Service Act, 1916. They created a sense of equality and fairness by enlisting all eligible males in an established order and placing the system under civilian control. The call up of conscripts was managed by the interior department, whilst medical examinations and applications for exemptions were handled by four medical and military boards, respectively. Though there were initial teething issues with these institutions due to the lack of resources and government guidance, it satisfied domestic opinion and produced the drafts needed to sustain the NZEF throughout 1918 and 1919.⁹²

Matthew Buck, John Crawford, Ian McGibbon, and Christopher Pugsley have expanded upon this and offered a short but excellent snapshot of manpower policies in New Zealand. McGibbon expertly explores the development of military policy in New Zealand from 1840 and how the decision to create the NZEF was a logical conclusion of this process. As an isolated part of the British Empire, New Zealand had become a lone supporter of imperial defence, as they feared the collapse of British imperial power across the Pacific. As part of the broader military reorganisation in 1909, which created a 30,000 strong territorial militia based

⁹² Ibid, pp. 102-124; Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, pp. 109-111; Western, J. R., *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century: The Story of a Political Issue, 1660-1802* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 128-129, 138 and 187-189.

on compulsion, the government asked the Chief of Imperial General Staff (CIGS), Field Marshal Sir William Nicholson, for advice on creating and maintaining an expeditionary force for European service. Unlike Britain and other Dominions, these plans were accompanied by an evaluation of wastage rates and New Zealand's population. It considered how a force of 8,000 to 10,000 could be created and sustained and, though wastage rates were underestimated at 65 to 75 percent, it was a unique milestone in military organisation and planning. This, according to Pugsley, led the Minister of Defence, Colonel Sir James Allen, to approach warfare in a scientific manner, as the creation and expansion of the NZEF was based upon a constant evaluation of wastage and available manpower. Initially composed of two infantry brigades, Allen only allowed the NZEF to expand to a division in 1916 once he was confident that reinforcements could be supplied to meet an annual wastage rate of 100 Percent. Though high, Buck and Crawford's expert analysis of casualties at Gallipoli explains Allen's hesitation, as some units, such as the Auckland Battalion, experienced a wastage rate of 170 percent.⁹³

Though a broader analysis of reinforcement policy is needed, Crawford has demonstrated New Zealand's unique position within the imperial army, as they avoided the succession of manpower crises that arose across the empire. Their scientific approach to manpower had created a large surplus of reinforcements and, at the behest of the British government, the government had formed the 4th New Zealand Brigade in March 1917. Though disbanded in February 1918 for a multitude of political and military reasons, the NZEF had a surplus of 20,000 reinforcements by November 1918. Indeed, manpower and reinforcement policies were so successful that domestic opinion felt that New Zealand's contribution to the imperial war effort was disproportionately high, especially when compared to other Dominions who had not enforced compulsion. Though Allen defended the government's position in public, including its reluctant decision to form the 4th New Zealand Brigade, he was frustrated by British and Dominion authorities. He condemned Australia for not imposing conscription and was even more frustrated by the Army Council's decision to secretly reduce their monthly quota of reinforcements. Allen became increasingly suspicious of British conduct and, once Australia's reduction was confirmed, the Cabinet negotiated the

⁹³ Crawford and Buck, *Phenomenal and Wicked*; McGibbon, Ian, *The Path to Gallipoli: Defending New Zealand 1840-1915* (Wellington: GP Books, 1991); McGibbon, Ian, 'The Shaping of New Zealand's War Effort, August-October 1914', in Crawford, John and McGibbon, Ian (eds), *New Zealand's Great War: New Zealand, The Allies and the First World War* (Auckland: Exisle, 2007), pp. 52-53; Pugsley, *The Anzac Experience*, pp. 51-70.

decrease of New Zealand's monthly quota from 15 to six and a half percent between July and December 1917.⁹⁴ Allen recognised the threat this posed to the enforcement of conscription, which would soon enlist married men, and through his 'clear thinking, determination and exceptional capacity for hard work', he ensured, 'New Zealand made a substantial and effective, but not extravagant or unreasonable, contribution to the imperial war effort.'⁹⁵

Reinforcement Policy and Practice

Alison Hine's and Richard Holt's research are the only monographs dedicated to reinforcement policy and practice in the British and Canadian historiographies. Hine's research focuses on how GHQ and the War Office developed a reinforcement system at home and on the Western Front between 1916 and 1918. It was slowly adapted from the reinforcement system outlined in the *Field Service Regulations* (FSR), 1909, which logistically 'pulled' reinforcements from the UK to a push system that provided a consistent flow of drafts to the frontline. Her argument echoes that used by advocates of the 'learning curve', claiming GHQ and the War Office consistently reviewed and altered the reinforcement policy as political and military authorities became more experienced at waging total war.⁹⁶ This was similar to Holt, who claimed 'the development of a complex and efficient reinforcement structure in Canada was not a unique development, but one that mirrored the transformation of the CEF into a truly professional army.'⁹⁷

There are few similarities beyond these conclusions, however. Hine claims military authorities systematically improved its reinforcement policy throughout the war, which formed part of a broader learning curve that led the BEF to become an experienced army that excelled at trench and, eventually, semi-open warfare. She attempted to convey this by investigating the development of administrative processes and structures that guided reinforcements. Her analysis successfully deconstructed aspects of change within the reinforcement system and provided a valuable insight on key developments, such as the rapid

⁹⁴ Crawford, "New Zealand is being bled to death", pp. 251-264; Crawford, John, "The Willing Horse Is Being Worked to Death": New Zealand's Manpower Problems and Policies in 1917', in Douglas, Delaney E. and Gardner, Nikolas (eds), *Turning Point 1917: The British Empire at War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2017), pp. 114-138; Delaney, Douglas E. and Frost, Mark, 'Introduction', in Delaney, Douglas E., Frost, Mark and Brown, Andrew L. (eds), *Manpower and the Armies of the British Empire in Two World Wars* (London: Cornell University Press, 2021), p. 5; Pugsley, *The Anzac Experience*, pp. 69-70.

⁹⁵ Crawford, "New Zealand is being bled to death", pp. 250 and 261-263.

⁹⁶ Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 297.

⁹⁷ Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 250.

improvements made to casualty reporting between 1914 and 1916. Yet, her focus was too narrow and, unfortunately, undermined by her chronological structure. Though she likely adopted this to provide a clear understanding of how the reinforcement system developed over time, her analysis lacked the space to delve into specific problems. For instance, the reinforcement system in the UK was formed of four different sections between 1915 and 1916. Regular units were supported by the Special Reserve (SR) and Extra Reserve (ER), whilst the TF received reinforcements from their respective second and third line battalions. Kitchener's New Armies were supported by the Second Reserve and Local Reserve, with the latter supporting locally raised 'Pals' battalions. Though her analysis covers how, and the reasons why, they were formed, it skirted around the impact of these decisions and how this duplication of effort undermined the reinforcement system.⁹⁸

Holt's research adopted a thematical structure that concentrated upon the administrative and organisational changes made to manpower and reinforcement policies across Canada and Europe.⁹⁹ Expanding upon Desmond Morton's assessment of the Ministry of Overseas Military Forces of Canada (OMFC) in the UK, he expertly dissects the reinforcement system into several inter-connected parts that, for best part of three years, remained unsynchronised.¹⁰⁰ There were three different drafting structures in Canada, Britain and Europe, which represented the logistical flow of manpower across the Atlantic from Canada to the CEF in Belgium and France. Though GHQ instigated many structural changes on the Western Front, the timely delivery of reinforcements was dependent upon the efficiency of the reinforcement systems in Canada and Britain. The difficulties experienced between 1915 and 1917 was therefore caused by reinforcement policy in each nation, as they adopted ineffective procedures that clashed. Samuel Hughes was partly to blame, as he disregarded pre-existing mobilisation plans and failed to co-ordinate the fledgling reinforcement systems in Britain and Canada. He blocked successive attempts to centralise it under one authority and it was not until his departure from government in late 1916 that the Canadian CGS, Lieutenant-General Sir Willoughby Gwatkin, was able to liaise with Canadian authorities in the UK. Between him and the newly established OMFC, which had replaced Hughes'

⁹⁸ Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 57-78.

⁹⁹ Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 4.

¹⁰⁰ Morton, Desmond, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada's Overseas Ministry in the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1982).

dysfunctional sub-militia council, they restructured the reinforcement system in tandem and streamlined the flow of reinforcements to France from 1917.¹⁰¹

Holt's analysis is perceptive as it evaluates a multitude of divergent themes that affected reinforcement policy. For example, he evaluates recruitment and training policies to gauge the impact they had on the flow of reinforcements overseas. Unsurprisingly, Hughes' decision to recruit through service battalions in December 1915 had led to a bottleneck in Canada, as it took time to complete the establishment of battalions during a prolonged recruitment slump. The practice of dispatching drafts from depots was banned and, on average, the time between enlistment in Canada and arrival in the UK had increased from 11 weeks in 1915 to 31 and 47 in 1916 and 1917, respectively. Though serious, the lack of training in Canada led to further delays, as recruits regularly failed to reach a proficient standard before embarkation. The 14 week training syllabus, as outlined by the War Office, was regularly disregarded by Canadian authorities, who lacked the equipment and expertise to properly instruct. Therefore, when battalions arrived in the UK and were tested, few soldiers had progressed beyond basic training. Most had to be retrained and shortages in reinforcements were due to inadequate recruitment and training policies. A similar though less severe situation existed in Australia and despite Lewis Frederick's claim that this was a logical process of graduate training, Holt is correct to label the system 'horribly inefficient'.¹⁰²

Nevertheless, Holt's analysis is an institutional 'top-down' perspective that forgoes the traditional social analysis. Though justifying parts of his argument with examples, he provides few case studies to test how policy was interpreted and implemented by the CEF.¹⁰³ For instance, the reinforcement system was rationalised in 1917 by reverting to the traditional model of territorial depots. These depots were formed in each province and sent drafts to corresponding territorial reserve units in England, who forwarded them onto its affiliated CEF units. Though simplifying the movement of drafts and creating a sense of regional identity that, until this point, had been absent from the CEF, there is no evidence to test its effectiveness. He does not provide a socio-economic breakdown of battalions to gauge

¹⁰¹ Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 169-250.

¹⁰² Ibid, pp. 142-156, 192-193 and 205-206; Frederickson, Lewis, 'The Development of Australian Infantry on the Western Front 1916-1918: An Imperial model of training, tactics and technology' (University of New South Wales PhD Thesis, 2015), pp. 100-123.

¹⁰³ Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 156.

regional composition, even though attestation files and the 1911 Census are available at the LAC.¹⁰⁴

Hine's analysis adopted this methodology to gauge the relationship between reinforcement policy and regimental integrity, which is a contested topic within British historiography. Though Hew Strachan is alone in his assertion that the regimental system collapsed in 1916, David French, J. G. Fuller and Clive Hughes claim it began to break down under the weight of heavy casualties. The reinforcement system was therefore streamlined with the introduction of the Training Reserve (TR) in September 1916, which removed regimental ties and 'nationalised' the British Army by consolidating the Second and Local reserves into a generic manpower pool.¹⁰⁵ Hine, however, defends the War Office's decision and, through a close analysis of military orders, claims the reinforcement system was designed to preserve the regional identity of regiments. Indeed, the traditional regimental reserve, including the SR, ER and TF third line, were retrained and prioritised for recruits, whilst the TR, which was affiliated to home commands, received the surplus and regularly supplied drafts to nearby regiments.¹⁰⁶ To support this, Hine examines the social composition of 12 battalions from Western Command, and selected a regular, New Army and TF battalion from the Cheshire Regiment, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, South Wales Borderers and King's Shropshire Light Infantry. By using the *Soldiers Died in the Great War* and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission dataset, she tracks the birth and enlistment locations of casualties to ascertain the local and regional identity of battalions between 1914 and 1918. The results support her argument. For instance, 82 percent of soldiers in the 1st Cheshire Regiment had enlisted within the regimental recruitment area in 1914. Though this dropped to 39 percent in 1918, 73 percent had been recruited in Western Command.¹⁰⁷

Though valuable, there are a handful of methodological errors that weakened her argument. For instance, the size of her samples were, in some cases, below the 10 percent

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, pp. 201-207 and 230-233

¹⁰⁵ French, David, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People c.1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 277-278; Fuller, J. G., *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1991), pp. 43-44; Hughes, 'The New Armies', pp. 99-126; Strachan, Hew, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 207-208.

¹⁰⁶ Hine, *Refilling Haig's Army*, pp. 23, 142, 299.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, pp. 54-55, 80-84, 205-210, 287-291.

margin needed for statistical validity. The data for enlistment locations across five TF battalions in 1915 had 75 data points, with some, such as the 1/6th Cheshire Regiment, having a single data entry. Though Hine admits the dubious nature of these results, as the numbers obtained prohibited a meaningful analysis, similar incidences occur. The 10th South Wales Borderers only had 49 entries for 1916, whilst the 1/5th Cheshire Regiment, 1/4th Royal Welsh Fusiliers and 1/4th King's Shropshire Light Infantry in 1917 had eight, 18 and 37 entries respectively for 1917.¹⁰⁸ Considering the establishment of each battalion was 1,007 men and these figures are meant to represent a yearly overview of losses, there are some gaps in her analysis.

Hine also selected her case studies from the same Home Command. This methodology has provided a useful guide to regimental integrity and, by choosing battalions from the English-Welsh Marches, offered an insight into how reinforcement policies affected different regiments from the same region. Yet, this has led to some generalisations within her argument, as little is mentioned of Scottish and Irish identities. The regimental system in Ireland had begun to breakdown in 1915 and, as Nicholas Perry and Timothy Bowman claim, the War Office were forced to impose radical changes from 1916. Men recruited in Ireland were earmarked for regular Irish battalions, whilst English drafts were used to maintain the Irish service battalions. Though Bowman challenges Perry's argument that this helped to preserve the Irish identity of regiments, as many battalions, including the 9th Royal Irish Rifles, had lost its local and national character through English drafts, it demonstrates the need to consider regional and national variation.¹⁰⁹

Helen McCartney's research on the Liverpool Territorials has acknowledged this. Her analysis of regimental integrity and the local identity of 1/6th and 1/10th King's (Liverpool Regiment) indicates similar patterns to Hine, as their Liverpoolian character expanded to include all of Lancashire. Yet, McCartney compared her results to Ian Beckett's analysis of the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion to gauge regional differences. This analysis considered a host of factors, including regional populations, the geographical composition of each Home

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, pp. 83, 137 and 209.

¹⁰⁹ Bowman, Timothy, *Irish Regiments in the Great War: Discipline and Morale* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 141-144; Grayson, Richard, *Belfast Boys: How Unionists and Nationalists Fought and Died Together in the First World War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), pp. 102 and 116; Perry, Nicholas, 'Nationality in the Irish Infantry Regiments in the First World War', *War and Society*, 12:1 (1994), pp. 65-95.

Command and the functionality of the reinforcement system. Indeed, Lancashire was a densely populated county with large urban centres, whilst Wales and the counties of Cheshire, Cumberland, Herefordshire, Shropshire, and Westmorland had much smaller populations. As a result, the 1/6th and 1/10th King's (Liverpool Regiment) were likely to receive conscripts from Lancashire, as it formed a large proportion of available manpower in Western Command. Buckinghamshire was a part of Southern Command however, which stretched from Cornwall to Warwickshire and included large cities such as Birmingham, Bristol, and Plymouth. Its small population was therefore overwhelmed, which ensured the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion received men from areas that had no local or regional connection to Buckinghamshire.¹¹⁰ Some care, however, must be taken when describing regional identities, as British society was structured by class and local community. Though it offered a sense of continuity to supply drafts from the broader county or region, localised pre-war identities may not have easily translated into regionalism.¹¹¹

McCartney expands beyond geographical factors and rightfully claims that individual need had to be balanced against total casualties, the requirements of other regiments and the role of any unit within an upcoming offensive. Political influence could also affect these considerations, as a well-connected patron could lobby for their regiment. Lord Derby, who was the Director-General of Recruiting between October 1915 and June 1916 and the Secretary of State for War from December 1916 to April 1918, was a proud sponsor of Lancastrian Territorials. He challenged Lord Kitchener in 1915 about his recruitment methods, 'to keep 'his units as Lancashire as possible' and communicated with a host of officers who commanded Lancastrian forces overseas.¹¹² Though Holt only alluded to the same possibility in Canada, both analyses show the impact patrons could have upon the reinforcement process.¹¹³

Posting between battalions of the same regiment is another factor to consider. Though many assume that this practice broke down in the early stages of the Great War, McCartney's unique analysis of casualty books, which records all reinforcements earmarked

¹¹⁰ Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', pp. 144-150; McCartney, Helen B., *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 58-67.

¹¹¹ Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', pp. 145-150.

¹¹² McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, pp. 71-72.

¹¹³ Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 190-191.

for and received by battalions on the frontline, defies this. By her estimation, 79 percent of men received by the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) between September 1917 and November 1918 were from battalions of the same regiment. Though most of these 'postings' will be shown to have come from amalgamations and the UK, a sizable number of soldiers did come from battalions of the same regiment.¹¹⁴ Though this process was controlled by senior 'A' staff officers in the War Office and BEF, Mark Connelly's analysis of the Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment) demonstrates how low-level military commanders attempted to do the same by cross-posting regular officers, NCOs, and other ranks between its service battalions.¹¹⁵ Overall, these analyses demonstrate that reinforcement policy must be weighed against how the military, from battalion commanders to divisional 'A' staff, understood, disseminated and implemented it across the imperial army.

Transnational Military Histories of the British Empire

Though the national historiographies of each nation have produced valuable analyses upon the recruitment and expansion of each nation's armed forces, our understanding of reinforcement and, more broadly, manpower policies across the British Empire, remain limited due to their national isolation. Whilst some such as Keith Jeffrey have considered how British Policy encompassed a 'global, imperial power system' that utilised its imperial resources to achieve victory, the growth of transnational military histories of the British Empire, typified in recent years by Douglas Delaney's *The Imperial Army Project* and Jonathan Fennell's *Fighting the People's War*, has expanded upon these histories. Delaney's research explores how the armies of the British Empire became interchangeable parts of a fully integrated imperial army that co-operated and fought together across the globe. Tracing the concept of an imperial army back to the reforms implemented in the aftermath of the South African War, Delaney carefully assesses the trajectory of the 'imperial army project' until its height in 1945, when India and the Dominions contributed 28 divisions towards the imperial war effort.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, pp. 67-72; Ian F. W. Beckett is due to publish an article in the near future on the casualty books of the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion.

¹¹⁵ Connelly, Mark, *Steady the Buffs! A Regiment, a Region, and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 19-23.

¹¹⁶ Beckett, Ian F. W. (ed.), *Citizen Soldiers and the British Empire, 1837-1902* (1902 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012); Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, pp. 4-6 and 296; Fennell, *Fighting the People's War*; Jeffrey, Keith, 'British Strategy and War Aims in the First World War', in Afflerbach, Holger (ed.), *The Purpose of the*

He considered how the War Office saw the Dominions as a large manpower reserve and, encouraged by the swell of imperial support between 1899 and 1902, attempted to harness it for future conflicts. The General Staff was formed in 1904 to provide guidance and, from 1909, it gained the prefix 'Imperial' and became a conduit for the exchange of ideas. Senior officers, named the 'Army Apostles', were also dispatched to each Dominion from 1904 to organise and train its armed forces for possible use in the British Army during an emergency.¹¹⁷ Some, including Edward Spiers, John Gooch, and Keith Jeffrey, have claimed these attempts failed to cultivate interest in an imperial army, as each Dominion refused to provide a firm commitment of support in the eventuality of war. Others, such as Donald C. Gordon and Richard Preston, criticise the importance attached to British authority and assert the agency and independence of each Dominion within this process. Forming part of a broader trend in the post-1945 period to demonstrate how many, 'abandoned their loyalty to Britain and British institutions' and became true compatriots, they claimed imperial centralisation had failed and the reforms enacted were due to the acquiescence of each Dominion for a broader framework of 'Commonwealth co-operation'.¹¹⁸ Yet, the 100 officers positioned across the Empire between 1904 and 1914 were able to navigate Dominion sensibilities and help forge a professional cadre of officers in each nation, as well as disseminate a common doctrine through education at the Royal Military Colleges of Sandhurst, Kingston and Duntroon in Britain, Canada and Australia, respectively. They were also pivotal in reorganising and re-equipping the armed forces of each Dominion to be in accordance with the British Army, which had been agreed upon at the Imperial Conference of 1909. Though Dominion autonomy led to some anomalies, such as the retention of the Ross Rifle in Canada, the efforts of these officers led to 10 compatible divisions and an infantry

First World War: War Aims and Military Strategies (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), pp. 45-60; Mitcham, John C., *Race and Imperial Defence in the British World, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Stockings, Craig, *Britannia's Shield: Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Hutton and Late-Victorian Imperial Defence* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Winegard, *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions*.

¹¹⁷ Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, pp. 5, 297-299.

¹¹⁸ Buckner, Philip, 'Introduction: Canada and the British Empire', in Buckner, Philip (ed.), *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 7; Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, p. 96; Gordon, Donald C., *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defence, 1870-1914* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1965); Preston, Richard, *Canada and "Imperial Defence": A Study of the origins of the British Commonwealth's defence organisation, 1867-1919* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967); Spiers, *Haldane*, pp. 116-134.

brigade between 1914 and 1918, which was ‘an exceptional rate of return’ and far beyond the initial expectations of the War Office.¹¹⁹

Timothy C. Wingard has added to this discussion through his assessment of the recruitment of indigenous peoples across the Dominions. He traces how indigenous populations were mobilised and, through an assessment of social, racial, and cultural attitudes, including martial race theories and the colonial-settler history of each nation, gauges how limited recruitment in 1914 and 1915 was slowly and, at times, grudgingly, increased to meet British demands for manpower. Despite the willingness of many indigenous peoples in 1914, ‘to serve as equals within Dominion forces’ to ‘demonstrate their loyalty to the empire and their home nations’, military and political authorities regularly excluded them. The defence acts of Australia and South Africa, implemented in 1904 and 1912 respectively, legally excluded indigenous populations from serving as combatants in their armed forces. Though Indians and Māoris were not excluded from the armed forces of Canada and New Zealand before 1914 and were subjects of the British crown by ‘constitution and treaty’, they were often refused by recruiters or relegated to the status of non-combatants.¹²⁰

Though military and political authorities recognised the practicalities of using indigenous peoples in warfare, as shown by their repeated use in colonial warfare, they feared that, ‘Indigenous elites and political organisations viewed war service as a tool to gain equality and respect within the broader spheres of Dominion politics and society’. This socio-political dialogue was transformed by Britain’s appeal to the Dominions to enlist large numbers of indigenous peoples for service abroad in October 1915. Winegard demonstrates how this affected recruitment policy in each nation and, ‘how the level of inclusion varied within the Dominions and was based on pragmatic requirements, domestic attitudes and contemporary philosophies and anxieties.’ Though Canada had shifted from one extreme to another and, without success, attempted to conscript Indians as British subjects under the Military Service Act in August 1917, Australia continuously refused to enlist Aborigines until its manpower crises became severe in 1917. Even after the failure to pass its conscription referenda, the government would only condone the enlistment of ‘half-castes’ if one of their parents was of European descent. ‘Full-bloods’ could only be enlisted if they had long association with, or

¹¹⁹ Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, pp. 40-41 and 44-94.

¹²⁰ Winegard, *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions*, pp. 1-5, 32-36, 66-67, 79-93 and 256-257.

were raised by, a 'white' family, whilst other minorities, such as Chinese-Australians, may have been able to enlist once recruitment slumped.¹²¹ Collectively, Delaney and Winegard demonstrate how the policies adopted by each nation were not isolated, but part of a complex response to war that attempted to balance national and societal needs against the military demands of empire and total war.

Despite this recent surge, there are only three transnational analyses of manpower across the armed forces of the British Empire.¹²² F. W. Perry's *The Commonwealth Armies* was an ambitious study that traced the creation and expansion of armed forces in Australia, Britain, Canada, India, New Zealand, and South Africa from 1907 to 1945. The analysis covered a number of important topics related to manpower throughout the Great War, including the difficulty of mass recruitment, conscription, and the overarching development of each national force.¹²³ Though Roger Broad has attempted a similar feat in *Volunteers and Pressed Men*, it does not surpass Perry's analysis. His argument provides limited insight and, at times, is undermined by the absence of modern scholarship. For example, his estimation that 117,000 Irishmen served throughout the war is below David Fitzpatrick's and Keith Jeffrey's recent estimation of 202,000, which was composed of 144,000 volunteers and 58,000 regular soldiers and reservist on the outbreak of war.¹²⁴

Nevertheless, Perry's argument focuses on military policy, ignores integral themes such as womanpower, and attempts to convey this in a short publication.¹²⁵ The research conducted on each nation's armed forces dramatically varied, whilst the 'national' structure adopted portrayed each in isolation. There was little comparative analysis and, though these problems reflect the broader historiographical trends noted above and the difficulties of conducting transnational research before digitisation, it does not consider how military and political authorities across the British Empire attempted to work independently, and as part

¹²¹ Ibid, pp. 4, 70, 97-99, 150-156, 160-162 and 256-257.

¹²² Delaney and Frost, 'Introduction', p. 7.

¹²³ Perry, *Commonwealth Armies*.

¹²⁴ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 108; Broad, Roger, *Volunteers and Pressed Men: How Britain and its Empire Raised its Forces in Two World Wars* (Croydon: Fonthill Media, 2016), pp. 29-30; Fitzpatrick, 'Collective Sacrifice', pp. 1017-1018; Jeffrey, Keith, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 6-7.

¹²⁵ Delaney and Frost, 'Introduction', p. 7.

of an imperial collective, to recruit and expand the imperial army for a global war of attrition.¹²⁶

Steve Marti has recently added to this by assessing voluntary mobilisation in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand throughout the Great War. The newly fledged Dominions lacked the means to create large armies in peace and, similar to Simkin's analysis of Kitchener's New Armies, conveys how voluntary efforts, from localised recruitment efforts for 'Pals' battalions to the support of Scottish and Irish cultural associations, mobilised and defined the war effort in each nation. War for many at home remained localised and the decision to participate in communal voluntary organisations, whether to raise funds and purchase equipment such as ambulances or contribute towards comfort funds for soldiers, was their contribution towards the war effort. Despite national differences, he draws common themes between the three nations and demonstrates how local communities rallied together to support their community, region, nation and empire in war.¹²⁷

Though vital for providing the initial impetus, 'the proliferation of patriotic initiatives often produced deep rivalries and tense conflicts. Voluntary mobilisation in the Dominions remained selective, exclusive, and competitive.' Donors had the autonomy to decide who to support and for what reasons, which undermined a coordinated effort needed to support each nation's forces overseas. This process reinforced social boundaries and divisions of 'gender, class, race, and indigeneity' across each nation, which had been shaped by their shared history as, 'settler colonies of Britain'. Organisers regularly defined who could support their voluntary efforts and often disregarded groups on the periphery of society, including indigenous peoples and migrants. Their attempts to support the British Empire were regularly marginalised due to the cultural fixation of settler communities to recreate the image of Britain, and to preserve the 'social and racial purity' of the British race across their new lands.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Perry, *Commonwealth Armies*, pp. 4-81 and 175-186; Dennis, Peter and Grey, Jeffrey, 'New Zealanders in the AIF: An Introduction to the AIF Database Project', in Crawford, John and McGibbon, Ian (eds), *New Zealand's Great War: New Zealand, The Allies and the First World War* (Auckland: Exisle, 2007), pp. 394-405; Inwood, Kris and Ross, J. Andrew, 'Big Data and the Military: First World War Personnel Records in Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and British Africa', *Australian Historical Studies*, 47:3 (2016), pp. 430-442.

¹²⁷ Marti, *For Home and Empire*, pp. 3-6, 14, 38-42 and 45-46.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 6-13 and 141-143; Delaney and Frost, 'Introduction', p. 7.

Though an excellent study, Marti does not consider the success of centralised policies within each Dominion. Though his work demonstrates the plethora of local voluntary organisations that mobilised to support community, nation and empire, his assertion that, 'The Dominion's reliance on selective voluntary patriotism defied the broader pattern of the totalizing logic practised by other belligerent states' does not hold true. New Zealand's ability to mobilise nearly 50 percent of its male population of military age for active service between 1914 and 1918 could not have been achieved without the centralising hand of government. The conscription system created was scientific and rigorous and without it, the Dominion could not have mobilised such numbers for overseas service.¹²⁹

Douglas Delaney, Mark Frost and Andrew L. Brown's recent edited collection, *Manpower and the Armies of the British Empire in the Two World Wars*, has helped to reorientate these national debates by providing a, "'follow through" of before-war, during-war, and after-war manpower issues from an imperial... perspective,' across both world wars. Though a broad collection that covers a multitude of themes from a national and imperial perspective, such as recruitment policy, the application of martial race theory and the care of veterans during and after war, its 'multinational and multifaceted' approach invites the reader to compare the various problems of, and solutions to, manpower across the British Empire.¹³⁰

The national and transnational military histories of the British Empire demonstrate the need to consider the impact of manpower and reinforcement policies upon imperial relations between Britain and the Dominions. Though, as outlined by Jeffrey, a rigid, top-down constitutional relationship in 1914, British attempts to guide and develop the mobilisation and manpower policies across its empire forced each Dominion to weigh imperial desire against their national priorities. These negotiations reshaped and redefined imperial relations throughout and after the war, as the acquisition and deployment of manpower formed a

¹²⁹ Archives New Zealand (ANZ), 8666, R21078971 (AD37/22/23), New Zealand Expeditionary Force: Its provision and maintenance, 1919, p. 64; *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914-1920* (London: HMSO, 1922), p. 771; Marti, *For Home and Empire*, p. 146.

¹³⁰ Delaney, Douglas E. and Brown, Andrew L., 'Conclusion: The Many Dimensions of Mobilizing Military Manpower', in Delaney, Douglas E., Frost, Mark and Brown, Andrew L. (eds), *Manpower and the Armies of the British Empire in Two World Wars* (London: Cornell University Press, 2021), p. 214-222; Delaney and Frost, 'Introduction', pp. 7-8.

regular point of contention.¹³¹ Though presented separately, Crawford's and William Stewart's analyses of New Zealand and Canadian manpower policies respectively demonstrate this. The decision to forge and disband the 4th New Zealand Brigade in 1917 was part of an ongoing negotiation of New Zealand's contribution to the imperial war effort, whilst the 5th Canadian Division was the subject of extensive imperial scrutiny from 1917. Though the Minister of the OMFC, Sir Albert Edward Kemp, followed the advice of the GOC Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie, and disbanded it for reinforcements in early 1918, the CIGS, Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson and his successor, General Sir Henry Wilson, continually applied pressure onto Kemp to revert this decision, deploy the 5th Canadian Division and to consider a sixth division.¹³²

By extension, it is important to consider civil-military relations within an imperial context. Specifically, how defence ministers across the empire, and their national governments as a whole, attempted to control and organise its armed forces as intermediaries between the Colonial and War Offices in London and their military who, at times, were led by imperial officers on loan from the British Army. The long term GOC AIF, Lieutenant-General Sir William Birdwood, who had succeeded Major-General Sir William Throsby Bridges after his death at Gallipoli in May 1915, extensively used his influence to support the imperial government and promote greater contributions to fulfil his ambition to lead an 'Australasian' or 'Dominion' army. When the War Office announced that the 3rd Australian Division may need to be broken up to reinforce the depleted 5th Australian Division in August 1916, Birdwood strenuously opposed this. Though Peter Charlton and Bruce Faraday considered this a calculated attempt by the War Office to push the Australian government to introduce compulsion, Birdwood used his influence to further his command position, rather than fulfilling his administrative role as head of the AIF to help the Australian Government formulate a sustainable manpower policy. This civil-military relationship had disastrous results for the AIF, as the Australian Corps nearly collapsed under the weight of its casualties by October 1918.¹³³ By analysing these developments within a comparative

¹³¹ Delaney, *Imperial Army Project*, pp. 117-122; Jeffrey, 'British Strategy', pp. 45-49.

¹³² Crawford, 'New Zealand is being bled to death', pp. 251-264; Stewart, William, 'Frustrated Belligerence: The Unhappy History of the 5th Canadian Division in the First World War', *Canadian Military History*, 22:4 (2015), pp. 31-46.

¹³³ Beaumont, Joan, 'The politics of a divided society', in Beaumont, Joan (ed.), *Australia's War, 1914-1918* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1995), pp. 43-45; Bou and Dennis, *The Australian Imperial Force*, pp. 50-54 and 69;

framework, it is possible to understand how manpower and reinforcement policies were not only formulated and implemented, but part of larger negotiations that reshaped and redefined imperial relations between Britain and the Dominions.

Research Questions and Structure of Analysis

Overall, the historiography assessed demonstrates the need for a transnational evaluation of reinforcement policy and practice in Britain and the Dominions. This research will therefore produce an analysis that focuses on how British and Dominion governments, principally Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, responded to industrial warfare and attempted to sustain their armed forces throughout a war of attrition. It will consider how they, as well as the British-led imperial army, created and developed reinforcement policy and systems, which stretched from the front line to each nation. It will assess its ability to produce trained reinforcements in a timely manner, as well as how the medical system worked in unison to 'recycle' wounded veterans back into the frontline. By framing this research within a comparative framework, the thesis shall examine how British authorities created their own reinforcement policy and attempted to guide and develop this in each Dominion. It will show how each Dominion attempted to weigh imperial desire against their national priorities and, through joint and individualised policies, yielded very different results. Though British and Australian authorities were able to create and adapt their reinforcement policy and system to meet the most pressing demands of industrial warfare, only New Zealand and, to a certain extent, Canada, created an efficient system. Military and political authorities in both nations had carefully adapted their manpower policies in light of wastage, and were able to forge a policy and system that adequately supplied their armed forces with trained reinforcements until the armistice.

To demonstrate this, the thesis is divided into six chapters that assesses reinforcement policy and system by geographic location. Though a thematical approach would have yielded interesting results, and at times informs the basis of some chapters, the reinforcement system was composed of several, inter-connected parts that represented the logistical flow of manpower from recruitment centres in Britain to the frontline on the

Connor, *Anzac and Empire*, pp. 81-82 and 102; Charlton, Peter, *Pozières 1916: Australians on the Somme* (Sydney: Methuen Haynes, 1986), pp. 269-278; Faraday, 'Half the Battle', pp. 116-121; Pugsley, *The ANZAC Experience*, pp. 272-274.

Western Front and beyond. Each part had its own responsibilities and, by pursuing this structure, the analysis can pinpoint complications that had repercussions across the entire system. Chapter One traces the creation and evolution of reinforcement policy from 1899 to the outbreak of war in 1914. In the aftermath of the South African War, successive Conservative and Liberal governments embarked upon military re-organisation after the mediocre performance of the British Army in 1899. This experience raised questions about reinforcement policy in civilian and military circles. It shaped army reform during the Edwardian period and formed a key component of Richard Haldane's reforms in 1908. He created a reinforcement system capable of supporting an expeditionary force for European service and converted the Militia into the SR to facilitate this, which represented a significant advancement in military organisation.

Chapter two considers the expansion of the British Army at home between 1914 and 1916, and how the Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, failed to create a reinforcement system able to support it. His recruitment policies flung the pre-war reinforcement system into chaos and attempts to expand it led to a proliferation of systems and procedures that conflicted with one another. This, as well as a sudden influx of wounded veterans and a lack of instructors, equipment, facilities, and competent commanding officers (CO), undermined the quality of training provided to recruits. It regularly delayed their departure for the front, and it was not until the Battle of the Somme, once the reinforcement system began to breakdown, that the War Office rationalised it through the creation of the TR in September 1916. Despite claims that this eroded regimental integrity, this chapter will use new data from four battalion casualty books, three of which have never been used before, to demonstrate how reinforcement policy transitioned regimental identity from a local to regional character.

Chapter three shall investigate how the reinforcement system developed in Britain from 1917 to 1918. It will analyse the changing demographic of recruits and the development of the TR through Young Soldier and Graduate Battalions, which aimed to provide men of 18 with extensive training before they were deployed at the age of 19. Despite some evident issues that undermined its effectiveness, the War Office carefully shaped the reinforcement system to match the manpower it received from compulsion, which stands in contrast to the chaos of earlier years. It will also consider the strategic distribution of manpower, and whether Britain had reached its manpower ceiling in the search for recruits. It will move

beyond the traditional historiographical debate, which focuses upon Lloyd George and the 'faceless' War Office, and consider this from a thematical perspective. Specifically, it will assess the policies of the MNS and the War Office, and whether they could have reinforced the BEF before the German Spring Offensive in March 1918. Overall, it will demonstrate that Britain had reached its manpower ceiling at the end of 1917 and, though some sources could be tapped, including the British Army at home, attempts to reinforce the BEF throughout 1918 had absorbed the last remnants of available manpower.

Chapter four will assess how GHQ initially organised, and subsequently adapted, its reinforcement policy and system between 1914 and 1917. Though at the end of the logistical chain of manpower, and therefore not responsible for training or sourcing drafts, it attempted to streamline its administrative processes and develop different structures to meet the challenges of trench and, eventually, semi-open warfare. Unlike the situation portrayed by proponents of the learning curve however, this process was far from a smooth, gradual transition that improved over time. Rather, its success was erratic as GHQ and the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, failed to grasp how the strategy of attrition, coupled with the limitations of the reinforcement system, affected operational practice. Haig's conviction that the BEF could breakout of enemy lines led him to strive for an operational tempo that the reinforcement system could not support. This led him to repeatedly commit depleted divisions that were in urgent need of rest and training, which reduced their combat effectiveness and led to heavier casualties on the battlefield.

Chapter five explores the consequence of these decisions and how the cost of attrition was met in 1918. It examines how the BEF retained a sense of its cohesion, skill, and professionalism through the development of medical and convalescent infrastructure, which was underpinned by the substitution of fit men with womanpower and colonial manpower. By using the same casualty book dataset from chapter two, the analysis demonstrates the success of these developments by conveying the proportion of 'recycled reinforcements' received in drafts by four battalions. It was not, however, sufficient to match attrition or the losses of the German Spring Offensive, which precipitated an irreversible drafting crisis and brought the BEF to the brink of collapse. Though the War Office and Haig attempted, with some success, to alter reinforcement policy and find untapped sources of manpower to draw upon, it was the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, General

Ferdinand Foch, who exerted supreme influence over British reinforcement policy. He convinced British authorities to abandon their plans to reduce 14 divisions, which enabled the Entente to push its numerical and material advantage over the German Army.

Chapter six focuses on the dilemma of reinforcement training on the Western Front. GHQ quickly found that reinforcements lacked fundamentals and key skills and, fearing the impact this would have upon operations, attempted to create a training system that balanced speed with the need for proficient replacements. Though successful at creating a standardised test and train system for British and Dominion forces by 1916, GHQ was attempting to resolve extensive problems outside their control with minimal manpower and resources. This is clear when compared to Dominion forces, who regularly adapted imperial policy to meet their own national circumstances. It is evident that the Canadian Corps' policies were far more successful than the BEF, as its homogenous organisation and structure gave its GOC, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie, a structural stability that enabled him to permanently influence and shape their training system. Its effectiveness was so apparent, that GHQ incorporated and disseminated it across the remainder of the imperial army. Though its effectiveness varied across the imperial army, as its success depended upon level of investment put in by each nation's armed forces, it demonstrates how ideas and practices were exchanged across the imperial army.

Through research across four nations and newly discovered archival sources, including three surviving battalion casualty books, this thesis will demonstrate how military and political authorities in Britain and, to some extent, the Dominions, attempted to tackle the challenges of attrition and implement a reinforcement system capable of sustaining catastrophic wastage. Rather than a series of policy reforms that systematically improved the reinforcement system, as argued by Hine and, more broadly, proponents of the learning curve, this thesis will demonstrate how success was erratic and far from efficient, with the BEF enduring extreme hardships that brought it to the brink of collapse in 1918.

Chapter One

Reforming the British Army: The Creation and Evolution of Reinforcement Policy, 1899-1914.

The British Army suffered a humiliating blow to its prestige during the South African War. The initial three defeats, suffered in December 1899 and known as 'Black Week', sent shockwaves across the empire and revealed a string of critical flaws in the British Army as an administrative and military machine. Despite the war continuing until the Peace of Vereeniging in May 1902, reform became imperative from 1901 under the Conservative Secretaries of State for War, William St. John Brodrick and H. O. Arnold-Forster. Although unsuccessful, Brodrick's and Arnold-Forster's actions represented an extended period of change and reform in the British and, more broadly, imperial armed forces between 1901 and 1914. These reforms have been part of extensive historiographical debate that, naturally, has focused on the extensive reforms implemented between 1906 and 1912 by the Liberal Secretary of State for War, Richard Haldane.¹³⁴

The experience of the South African War had raised serious questions about a reinforcement policy in civilian and military circles. Indeed, these questions focused on three key themes that, in turn, shaped and informed army reform during the Edwardian period. Firstly, the size and role of the Army Reserve was considered, with debate focusing on whether it should be used to form or supplement an expeditionary force in war. Secondly, how could the regular army be efficiently expanded in war and, lastly, what was the best means of providing drafts to cover battlefield wastage? Therefore, this chapter will trace these questions and evaluate the evolution of a reinforcement policy from the South African War to the outbreak of the Great War. Although the Conservative Secretaries of State for War, Brodrick and Arnold-Forster, considered some of these questions, Haldane was the first to tackle them in unison. Based on his newly constructed expeditionary force, Haldane

¹³⁴ Beckett, Ian F. W, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558-1945*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 197-224; Bowman, Timothy and Connelly, Mark, *The Edwardian Army: Recruiting, Training and Deploying the British Army, 1902-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Satre, Lowell, 'St. John Brodrick and Army Reform, 1901-1903', *Journal of British Studies*, 15:2 (1976), pp. 117-139; Spiers, Edward M., *Haldane: An Army Reformer* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1980); Stoneman, Robert, 'The Reformed British Militia, c.1852-1908' (University of Kent PhD Thesis, 2014), pp. 221-254; Tucker, Albert, 'The Issue of Army Reform in the Unionist Government, 1903-1905', *The Historical Journal*, 9:1 (1966), pp. 90-100; Williams, Rhodri, *Defending the Empire: The Conservative Party and British Defence Policy, 1899-1915* (London: Yale University Press, 1991).

envisaged a reinforcement policy that could create, expand, and sustain it in war. This underpinned the conversion of the Militia into the SR and, as will be argued, represented a significant advancement in military organisation. Although portrayed within the historiography as a moment of transition and not an 'outright break with the past', the SR, as an administrative and military mechanism, was distinct from the Militia.¹³⁵ Although Haldane compromised the basis of his reinforcement policy by altering the role of the newly created TF, he must be credited with creating the basis of a reinforcement system that could sustain the British Army in war.

In October 1900, the Conservative Party returned to power through their landslide victory at the Khaki election. Although they had mistakenly claimed to have 'won the war', the Conservatives had campaigned to reform the army after its disastrous performance in the opening stages of the South African War.¹³⁶ Amongst the list of faults and failures, it was evident the army lacked the administrative machinery and organisation needed to create, expand, and sustain a field force in war.¹³⁷ The first problem was the use of the Army Reserve to create the force sent to South Africa. The Army Reserve was created by the transition to a short-service army in 1870 during the Cardwell reforms, which enlisted infantry recruits for seven years with the colours and five in the reserve. By 1st January 1899, the Army Reserve had grown to 78,898 men and was deemed a 'liberal' surplus to the regular army by the Conservative Secretary of State for War, the 5th Marquess of Lansdowne.¹³⁸ Yet, out of an estimated 61,371 reservists mobilised in 1899, 41,957 were used to bring the army up to its war establishment, so the initial two army corps, as well as the subsequent 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th Divisions, could be deployed.¹³⁹ This was due to persistent recruitment problems in the army, as military service remained deeply unpopular within Victorian society. As a result, the army largely attracted a small proportion of working-class men, most of whom were experiencing economic destitution. This limited stream forced the army to recruit a significant number of

¹³⁵ Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p. 120; Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', p. 222.

¹³⁶ Satre, 'St. John Brodrick and Army Reform', p. 118.

¹³⁷ 1903 (Cd. 1789), *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners appointed to inquire into the military preparedness and other matters connected with the war in South Africa* (Hereafter *Elgin Report*), pp. 4-142.

¹³⁸ 1902 (Cd. 962), *Annual Report for the Inspector-General of Recruiting for the Year 1901*, p. 39; *Elgin Report*, p. 261.

¹³⁹ The National Archives (TNA), CAB37/68/5, 'Defects in the existing system of Infantry organization and recruiting', 15th January 1904; 1903 (Cd. 1790), *Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa, Vol. I*, pp. 197-198; *Elgin Report*, pp. 39-40.

men who were below the War Office's medical standards. Though a sizable number became fit through steady exercise and diet, many of these men, who formed 19.9 to 34.3 percent of the yearly intake between 1895 and 1899, were subsequently discharged. Unsurprisingly, this left the army 23,681 men short of its peacetime establishment in January 1899. This deficit was exacerbated by the Cardwell-Childers reforms, which had created a regimental system of linked battalions in 1881. Due to the need to maintain the strength of the battalions serving overseas, battalions at home were little more than feeder units. Thus, they were consistently low in strength and composed of recruits and adolescent soldiers who were unable to serve overseas. Therefore, the bulk of the reserve was used to bring units up to their war establishment and only left 18,424 reservists for other duties.¹⁴⁰

This fed into two other problems, expansion and drafting. The provision of wartime expansion and drafts had been contemplated within the Cardwell system. In theory, surplus reservists and adolescent soldiers were to be organised and trained at enlarged regimental depots. After completing their training, these soldiers could either be used as drafts or a nucleus for a new unit. Although considered an essential part of the Cardwell system, the low number of reservists available, as well as the complete lack of offices and NCOs at home, forestalled this. In total, only eight new battalions, the 3rd and 4th battalions of the Northumberland Fusiliers, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, Lancashire Fusiliers and Manchester Regiment were created in 1899. Yet, even this is misleading, as half of these battalions had been authorised in 1898.¹⁴¹ Thus, with a desperate need for to augment the army in South Africa, the auxiliary forces were deployed. Though new units were raised from these forces, including the City Imperial Volunteers and the Imperial Yeomanry in 1899, the Militia, who had no legal obligation to serve outside the UK, were asked to undertake active service abroad for the first time since the Crimean War.¹⁴² In all, 45,566 and 5,922 militiamen were deployed in South Africa and the Mediterranean respectively, as part of 68 infantry

¹⁴⁰ 1900 (Cd. 110), *Annual Report for the Inspector-General of Recruiting for the Year 1899*, pp. 10-11 and 39; *Elgin Report*, p. 40; Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p. 42; Spiers, Edward M., *The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 127-128.

¹⁴¹ 1899 (Cd. 9185), *Annual Report for the Inspector-General of Recruiting for the Year 1898*, p. 4; *Report for the Inspector-General of Recruiting for the Year 1899*, p. 7; TNA, CAB37/68/21, 'Defects in the existing system of Infantry organization and recruitment', 8th February 1904; Hansard, House of Commons Debate (HC), 23rd April 1907, Vol. 172, cc. 1632.

¹⁴² Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, pp. 200-203; Hay, George Murray, *The Yeomanry Cavalry and Military Identities in Rural Britain, 1815-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 172-208.

battalions and several ancillary formations.¹⁴³ Unsurprisingly, the hasty, *ad hoc* expansion of the regular army with auxiliary troops affected the quality and efficiency of the field force in South Africa. Although Militiamen were praised for their efforts, officers and other ranks were criticised for their lack of training and military knowledge.¹⁴⁴

Moreover, the British Army lived a hand-to-mouth existence in terms of producing drafts. Although an estimated 90,039 soldiers were drafted overseas during the conflict, they were drawn from several unsustainable, *ad hoc* sources. Other than the Army Reserve, the only other body earmarked for drafting was the Militia Reserve, which had been introduced by the Militia Reserve Act in 1867. For a £1 bounty, which has a contemporary value of £63, Militiamen could undertake an additional liability to serve with the regular army in the event of hostilities. They enlisted for a five year period and, in order to maintain the regimental integrity of Militia units, no more than a quarter of each regiment could enlist at once. Although the Militia Reserve numbered 30,000 by 1899, it and the Army Reserve had been depleted by September 1900. Moreover, it was only able to draft 13,598 men to the line, as many were deemed unfit on embodiment or had to be used to reinforce Militia battalions in South Africa.¹⁴⁵

Beyond this, the army had no mechanism to recruit and train new men for drafts and relied upon normal enlistments, recovered convalescents and adolescent soldiers turning 20 to cover wastage. Even this limited supply overwhelmed regimental depots at home due to a lack of officers and NCOs. To relieve pressure, the War Office attached an estimated 18,000 adolescent soldiers to Militia battalions. Not only did this disrupt training but, in the confusion of rapid wartime expansion, they were accidentally deployed in South Africa with the militia units they had been attached too.¹⁴⁶ To shore up the temperamental supply of drafts, the War Office had to authorise the creation of affiliated Volunteer service companies for each territorial line regiment in South Africa. Although 14,068 Volunteers came forward to serve

¹⁴³ Butler, William, *The Irish Amateur Military Tradition in the British Army, 1854-1992* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 145-148; Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', p. 202.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 208-209; 1904 (Cd. 2061), *Report of the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers* (Hereafter *Norfolk Report*), pp. 2 and 6.

¹⁴⁵ 1901 (Cd. 519), *Annual Report for the Inspector-General of Recruiting for the Year 1900*, p. 20; *Elgin Report*, pp. 40-41; ; TNA, 'Currency Converter', <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/> [last accessed 24/02/2023]; Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', pp. 56 and 202.

¹⁴⁶ TNA, CAB37/68/5, 'Defects in the existing system of Infantry organization', 15th January 1904.

overseas in the period of October 1899 to September 1900, this was only a temporary solution. Once the initial crisis had passed, the popularity of serving overseas had waned and, in the following period, only 5,192 volunteered for service.¹⁴⁷

Altogether, the experience of the South African War had demonstrated the necessity of a reinforcement policy. Yet, it must be noted that the absence of one was not necessarily evident before this, as the British Army had not fought a major campaign against a modern European power since the Crimean War of 1853-1856. Although the army became expert in fighting small wars across the globe, these campaigns were limited in scope and provided little guidance on how to prepare for or operate on a modern battlefield.¹⁴⁸

Indeed, without a reinforcement policy and a robust administrative organisation to support it, the army could not efficiently create, expand or sustain an expeditionary force for use against a first-class enemy power. However, these faults did not come to the forefront of army reform until Arnold-Forster succeeded Brodrick as Secretary of State for War in the Autumn of 1903. Many of the faults discussed were not evident until the publication of the Elgin Commission in July 1903 and, due to military and political pressure, Brodrick had pushed ahead with military reform in March 1901.¹⁴⁹ For Brodrick, his aim was to tackle the growing fear over imperial security and criticism of the government's handling of the South African War. To achieve this, he initiated a programme of rapid reform that tackled the most evident faults exposed by the army during the first year of war. Whilst retaining the Cardwellian principle of an equal number of battalions at home and abroad, Brodrick's scheme aimed to reorganise the army at home into six self-contained army corps. The first three corps, numbering 120,000 men, were to be formed from regular units and used as an all-arms strike force capable of immediate deployment in Europe or the empire. The remaining three corps were to be composed of Militia, Volunteer and Yeomanry units, selected for their efficiency and used as an organised home defence force. Whilst this represented a significant shift from the Stanhope Memorandum of 1888 and its low prioritisation of a continental commitment, it aimed to create an organised and well-trained field force in peace. The addition of three home defence corps, however, was a political necessity, as the weak state of home defence

¹⁴⁷ *Annual Report for the Inspector-General of Recruiting for the Year 1900*, pp. 4 and 7; *Annual Report for the Inspector-General of Recruiting for the Year 1901*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁸ Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p. 272.

¹⁴⁹ Williams, *Defending the Empire*, pp. 10 and 21.

had become a political scandal in Parliament and the press in 1900.¹⁵⁰ Although Brodrick's planned reorganisation was criticised, especially from commissioned MPs in the Militia and Volunteer lobbies, he passed his reform programme with limited resistance in 1901.¹⁵¹

Whilst Brodrick did not attempt to create or implement a reinforcement policy, parts of his planned reorganisation exacerbated pre-existing problems. Brodrick claimed his reforms attempted to restore the strength of the Army Reserve in 1902 by changing the length of service in the infantry to three years with the colours and nine in the reserve. The Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Thomas Kelly-Kenny, hinted at this when presenting evidence to the Elgin Commission in October 1902, whilst Brodrick himself argued that, 'from the moment that the three years' system was introduced it was agreed that the large reserve which would result from it should be used to decrease the men actually serving with the colours'.¹⁵²

The Army Reserve had taken a severe blow during the South African War. Not only had all reservists been mobilised, but many were killed, permanently wounded or time expired. No soldier had been transferred to the reserve between 1899 and 1902, with the additional time in the colours taken off their reserve period. Accordingly, the reserve had dwindled to 20,000 men in October 1902 and, despite rising to 74,940 in October 1904, most reservists only had a small portion of their reserve period remaining.¹⁵³

Table 1.1, which traces the size of the Army Reserve from 1901 to 1913, demonstrates Brodrick's scheme had impressive short term results. Between October 1904 and 1905, when the first cohort of three-year enlistments expired and entered the reserve for nine years, it increased by 19,830 men. In the subsequent two periods of 1905-1906 and 1906-1907, there was a further increase of 15,826 and 14,744 men, respectively. This represented a significant increase compared to original seven year engagement, as the largest increase to the reserve

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 11-12 and 22-23; Satre, 'St. John Brodrick and Army Reform', pp. 122 and 125; *Morning Post*, 12th January 1900; *Globe*, 31st January 1900; *Herts. and Cambs. Reporter*, 2nd February 1900; *Gloucester Citizen*, 3rd February 1900; *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 17th February 1900; *The Warder*, 24th February 1900; Hansard, HC, 8th March 1901, Vol. 90, cc. 1056-1078.

¹⁵¹ Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', p. 256; Williams, *Defending the Empire*, p. 14.

¹⁵² TNA, CAB37/70/59, 'Reorganisation of the army', 22nd April 1904; *Evidence Taken Before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa*, Vol. I, p. 197.

¹⁵³ 1914 (Cd. 7252) *The General Annual Report on the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1913*, p. 102; *Evidence Taken Before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa*, Vol. I, p. 197.

Table 1.1: Effective strength of the Army Reserve, 1901-1913.¹⁵⁴

Year	Effective Strength 1 st October:	Increase/Decrease
01/01/1901*	5,251	
01/01/1902*	2,398	-2,853
01/01/1903*	32,865	30,467
1903-1904	74,940	42,075
1904-1905	94,770	19,830
1905-1906	110,596	15,826
1906-1907	125,370	14,774
1907-1908	133,949	8,579
1908-1909	134,556	607
1909-1910	135,712	1,156
1910-1911	138,531	2,819
1911-1912	139,077	546
1912-1913	145,090	6,013

*Effective Strength of Army Reserve calculated on 1st January.

during the previous decade was 8,174.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, there are two problems with this argument. Firstly, the argument made by Brodrick was retrospective and intended to legitimise the reforms he implemented. Originally, it appears Brodrick reduced the length of military service to three years to diffuse Parliamentary criticism regarding the plausibility of his proposal. His army corps scheme required an additional 11,500 men on the army's establishment and MPs were uncertain, considering the difficulties of recruitment, how he would source the additional manpower. Therefore, to make military service more attractive to potential recruits, Brodrick reduced the length of service to three years. Yet, this was unsuited to the army's role of garrisoning the empire, as the regular rotation of short-service troops would be costly and inefficient. Therefore, in an attempt to provide the requisite number of drafts, Brodrick aimed to entice 75-80 percent of soldiers to extend their service to eight years by offering additional service pay. Unsurprisingly, this failed to resolve the problem. Although the number of recruits entering the army increased, military service remained unpopular and only 42.8 percent of soldiers extended their service in 1904. This led

¹⁵⁴ Compiled from 1904 (Cd. 1778), *Annual Report for the Inspector-General of Recruiting for the first nine months of 1903*, p. 32; 1905 (Cd. 2263), *Annual Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting for the year ending 30th September 1904*, p.15; *The General Annual Report on the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1913*, p. 102.

¹⁵⁵ *Annual Report for the Inspector-General of Recruiting for the Year 1901*, p. 39.

to a rapid turnover of personnel and demonstrates that the rapid expansion of the reserve was merely a by-product of Brodrick's failed attempt to resolve the ongoing recruitment crisis.¹⁵⁶

The second problem was a direct result of this. Whilst the high turnover numerically benefitted the reserve, it diminished the strength of the regular army and led to a drafting crisis in 1905. With battalions at home congested with three-year service soldiers unwilling to extend their engagement, the War Office struggled to provide the requisite number of drafts needed to maintain imperial garrisons. As a result, the War Office asked for volunteers at home on three and seven year colour service engagements, over two and five years service respectively, to prematurely pass into the reserve. The aim was to pass soldiers, unable to be drafted, into the reserve and replace them with recruits who could be sent overseas. Despite 9,026 soldiers prematurely entering the reserve in 1905, it coincided with a significant decline in recruitment, with recruits for the infantry falling from 29,742 in 1903-1904 to 22,170 in 1904-1905. As a result, battalions at home were severely weakened, with the infantry alone being 14,242 under their peacetime establishment in October 1905. Thus, any attempt to mobilise the army corps would have depleted the reserve and led to the same problems experienced in 1899.¹⁵⁷

The precarious state of the army and reserve was exacerbated by Brodrick's decision to abolish the Militia Reserve. Due to the Militia becoming integral to the three home defence army corps, Brodrick argued that the Militia Reserve should only supply drafts to the Militia. He claimed that service in South Africa had made the force unpopular and that the Militia itself should not be sent into action when their best men had been drafted to the regular army. Thus, the new reserve was to number 50,000, composed of ex-militiamen and ex-regulars who had undertaken ten and fourteen years of service, respectively. Disregarding the fact that this was an overly ambitious target for an institution that struggled to recruit its peacetime establishment, Brodrick had abolished the only other manpower reserve used for

¹⁵⁶ Hansard, HC, 11th March 1901, Vol 90, cc. 1246-1272; Hansard, HC, 14th March, Vol. 90, cc. 1606-1669; Hansard, HC, 15th March 1901, Vol. 91, cc. 130-154; Hansard, HC, 13th May 1914, Vol. 93, cc. 1483-579; TNA, CAB37/68/21, 'Defects in the existing system of Infantry organization and recruitment', 8th February 1904; Bowman and Connolly, *The Edwardian Army*, p. 44; Williams, *Defending Empire*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁷ 1906 (Cd. 2693), *General Annual Report of the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1905, with abstracts for previous years*, pp. 6-7, 34, 48-49.

covering wastage in the regular army.¹⁵⁸ This was a substantial blow, as the Militia Reserve had provided 13,598 men, or 42.5 percent, of all drafts sent to the British Army between October 1899 and September 1900.¹⁵⁹ This problem was not missed in Parliament and some MPs did raise their concerns. Notably, this included the leader of the opposition, Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who argued that Brodrick, 'proposes, with a sweep of his pen, to drop out of his system this force, which has... proved itself a useful and trustworthy force'.¹⁶⁰ Yet, this was heartily welcomed by the Militia Lobby, who had disliked the loss of their best men as drafts. The Conservative Under-Secretary of State for War, Lord Raglan, echoed this, declaring he looked forward with 'very great pleasure' to the Militia Reserve being used to strengthen his local regiment, the Royal Monmouthshire Engineers, on embodiment.¹⁶¹ Despite the military ramifications, this decision was clearly motivated by politics and designed to placate Parliamentary resistance.

Rhodri Williams claimed that Brodrick's scheme enabled the Militia to undertake wartime expansion. He argued that the army corps scheme would provide better organisation and training which, in turn, would increase the Militia's efficiency and ability to expand the regular army in war. Yet, Brodrick had firmly tied the Militia to home defence and ensured this was their primarily role. Although the force could, in theory, serve overseas, its liability had not been changed and it would require the same *ad hoc* procedure of volunteering for service as had been used in the South African War.¹⁶²

With the army corps scheme existing only on paper and a fracturing of support over the role of the Militia, resistance against Brodrick's reforms began to solidify in 1903. In relation to the latter, MPs and the Cabinet were ardent supporters of the Blue Water School of thought. Collectively, they believed that the Royal Navy was capable of protecting the UK from foreign invasion alone. This was endorsed by the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) in November 1903, which stated that the Royal Navy could prevent an invasion force of 70,000 or more from landing. Thus, with only the possibility of large 'raids', the use of three

¹⁵⁸ Hansard, HC, 8th March 1901, Vol. 90, cc. 1072-1073; Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', pp. 127-135 and 225-226.

¹⁵⁹ *Elgin Report*, pp. 40-41.

¹⁶⁰ Hansard, HC, 13th May 1901, Vol. 93, cc. 1497-1498 and 1550.

¹⁶¹ Hansard, HC, 11th March 1901, Vol. 90, cc. 1243; Hansard, HC, 14th March 1901, Vol. 90, cc. 1636; Hansard, House of Lords debate (HL), 25th June 1901, Vol. 93, cc. 1380-1381; *Harts Army List*, 1901, p. 859.

¹⁶² Williams, *Defending the Empire*, pp. 11-13 and 24-26.

army corps for home defence became superfluous.¹⁶³ Despite being contested by the War Office and the Norfolk Commission, which recommended an army of 350,000 conscripts for home defence in 1904, Brodrick's scheme had been struck a significant blow.¹⁶⁴

Moreover, Brodrick faced resistance from Arthur Balfour, who had become Prime Minister in July 1902. Unlike Brodrick, Balfour believed that the Militia should expand the army in war and argued in February 1900 that they were the 'true reserve of the army'.¹⁶⁵ The strength of Balfour's opinion had grown over time and was deeply influenced by the growing threat posed to India. Between 1902 and 1905, Balfour, the War Office and Indian Office became increasingly fearful of a Russian invasion of India after the near completion of the Orenburg-Tashkent Line, which connected European Russia to Afghanistan. Considered a precursor to hostile action by Russia, the defence of India became the centrepiece of Balfour's defence strategy.¹⁶⁶ Keenly aware of the need to provide reinforcements if war broke out, Balfour, as well as other influential Cabinet members, such as the 4th Marquess of Salisbury, were convinced that the Militia must be used for wartime expansion.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, this viewpoint had been supported by the publication of the Elgin Commission in July 1903. Although the commission was only an enquiry identifying defects in the administration of the army, it dealt a crippling blow to Brodrick's scheme. In one of the few definitive conclusions made, the report outlined that, 'the true lesson of the war in our opinion is, that no military system will be satisfactory which does not contain powers of expansion outside the limit of the regular forces of the Crown'.¹⁶⁸

Thus, Balfour used the tariff reform scandal to reshuffle his cabinet and replaced Brodrick as Secretary of State for War with H. O. Arnold-Forster in October 1903.¹⁶⁹ Quick to

¹⁶³ Ibid, pp. 15-16 and 25; Hansard, HC, 14th May 1901, Vol. 94, cc. 122; TNA, CAB38/10/90, 36th Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) meeting, 24th March 1904; Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', pp. 227-228.

¹⁶⁴ *Norfolk Report*, pp. 16 and 70-72.

¹⁶⁵ TNA, CAB37/52/27, 'Notes on future Army reform chiefly in connection with Auxiliary Forces', 24th February 1900.

¹⁶⁶ TNA, CAB38/4/4, 'Defence of India: Strategical effect of rail extension of the Russian railway system from Samarkand to Termez', 4th January 1904; Beckett, Ian F. W., 'H.O. Arnold-Forster and the Volunteers', in Beckett, Ian F. W. and Gooch, John (eds), *Politicians and Defence: Studies in the Formulation of British Defence Policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), p. 48; Williams, *Defending the Empire*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁶⁷ Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', p. 228.

¹⁶⁸ *Elgin Commission*, p. 83; Bowman and Connolly, *The Edwardian Army*, p. 150; Delaney, Douglas, *The Imperial Army Project: Britain and the Land Forces of the Dominions and India, 1902-1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 7; Satre, 'Brodrick and Army Reform', p. 136.

¹⁶⁹ Williams, *Defending the Empire*, pp. 43-45.

act, he outlined the key problems faced by the army and noted how they could be resolved in early 1904. Unlike Brodrick, Arnold-Forster was adamant that the greatest problem affecting the army was the reserve and its structural organisation. He stressed that the army could not create, expand or sustain a field force overseas and focused upon the problems discussed above. He noted that the reserve, as it stood, was, 'a substitute for, and not a supplement to the men serving' with the colours, as no force could be mobilised without calling up a substantial number of reservists. He argued that the army lacked adequate means of expansion due to the decrepit state of the Militia and, most interestingly, hinted at the problem of drafting. Specifically, he criticised the current state of small regimental depots and noted the need for an organisation that could effectively manage and train recruits, adolescents and unfit soldiers after mobilisation.¹⁷⁰ However, these were not new claims. Arnold-Forster was a prolific writer on the army and, in several publications between 1892 and 1900, had outlined the same problems.¹⁷¹

To resolve this, Arnold-Forster formulated a system that, in theory, was a robust organisation based upon a clear reinforcement policy. Similar to the solutions presented in his publications, Arnold-Forster proposed to create two separate armies, based on home and foreign service, supported by 15 regional depots. Principally, he argued that the full military power of the army was hindered by the Cardwell System of linked battalions, as it tied down half of all infantry units in the UK. Therefore, he proposed to abolish the system and reduce the number of infantry battalions from 156 to 142, by disbanding the 3rd and 4th battalions of the Northumberland Fusiliers, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, Royal Fusiliers, Lancashire Fusiliers, Worcestershire Regiment, Middlesex Regiment and Manchester Regiment. Out of the remaining 142 units, 112 battalions were to be formed into a long-service army for garrisoning the empire, with men over 19 enlisting for nine years with the colours and three in the reserve. The disposition of units was flexible, but Arnold-Forster proposed 25 battalions be kept at home. Out of this, eight battalions, alongside a Guards Brigade, were to be maintained at their war establishment and formed into a 'strike force' capable of immediate

¹⁷⁰ TNA, CAB37/68/5, 'Defects in the Existing System of Infantry Organization and Recruiting', 15th January 1904.

¹⁷¹ Arnold-Forster, H. O., *Army Letters, 1897-1898* (London: Edward Arnold, 1898), pp. XII, 24-25, 99-104, 106-107, 111, 114 and 119-120; Arnold-Forster, H. O., *Our Home Army* (London: Cassel., 1892), pp. 53, 89-95; Arnold-Forster, H. O., *The War Office, the Army, and the Empire; A Review of the Military Situation in 1900* (London: Cassell, 1900).

deployment. The remaining 30 battalions were to be transformed into a short-service home army, enlisting men from the age of 18 for two years colour and ten years reserve service. The Militia would contribute 60 battalions towards this force and bring the total to 90 battalions, with the remainder being abolished or transferred to the Volunteers. Kept at a strength of 500, these battalions had two roles. They were designed to rapidly increase the strength of the reserve whilst, simultaneously, providing a regular cadre that could be used for wartime expansion. Overall, long service battalions were estimated to generate 21,700 reservists, whilst short service units would supplement it by 171,900. Although soldiers in short-service units would only have two years training with the colours, Arnold-Forster planned for reservists to be interchangeable and used to support the foreign service army. To ensure they were trained for this purpose, reservists were to receive refresher training on the first, second, third and fifth year of their reserve service. Arnold-Forster never specified what form this would take, but he did suggest in 1906 that a training camp of 15, or 28 days, may be suitable.¹⁷²

Additionally, all regimental depots were to be abolished and replaced with 15 enlarged depots, modelled on the Winchester depot that served both the King's Royal Rifle Corps and Rifle Brigade. Eight depots were allocated to training long service recruits and another seven for short service, which would provide six and three months of basic training, respectively. Each would support several regiments from one region and recruits, once they had completed their training, had to apply to serve with an affiliated battalion. This was designed to foster strong territorial links and, in effect, remodelled the regimental system on regional identities. If war broke out, reservists would be mobilised and used to bring short and long service battalions up to their war establishment, whilst leftover reservists, adolescent soldiers and short service recruits would return to their respective depots. This system provided flexibility, as reservists and recruits were housed and trained at the depot and could, depending on the situation, be used as drafts, or formed into new units for a number of regiments. Arnold-Forster predicted that this would improve the army's

¹⁷² TNA, CAB37/68/19, 'Defects in the existing system of Infantry organization and recruitment, Part II: Some suggested remedies', 1st February 1904; Arnold-Forster, *Army Letters*, pp. 119-120; Arnold-Forster, H. O., *The Army in 1906; A Policy and a Vindication* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1906), pp. 51-58, 62-69 and 92-100; Arnold-Forster, *The War Office, the Army, and the Empire*, pp. 89-97.

organisation and, compared to the previous system, lead to a net increase of 120,430 infantrymen on the outbreak of war.¹⁷³

Theoretically, this met the strategic requirements needed for the defence of India, as outlined by Balfour and the CID in late 1904. Although the Indian Government and Field-Marshal Viscount Herbert Kitchener, Commander-in-Chief India, desired reinforcements totalling 143,000 in the first 12 months of war, the CID agreed to provide a minimum of 100,000.¹⁷⁴ Yet, Arnold-Forster's scheme was never implemented, and he failed to enact any meaningful change during his time in office. This occurred for two reasons. Firstly, his scheme was politically unviable as it alienated numerous factions within the Conservative party. It encountered immediate resistance within the Cabinet and, despite attempts to sway their opinion, he failed to convince his colleagues to support it.¹⁷⁵ Both Salisbury and the Earl of Selbourne were opposed to disbanding the Militia, as they were Militia colonels of the 4th Bedfordshire Regiment and 3rd Hampshire Regiment, respectively. Brodrick, now Secretary of State for India, defended his reforms and argued that this scheme would increase the army estimates from £28,800,800 to £29,300,000 during the next financial year. This was far from the projected target of £25,000,000, which had been proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Austen Chamberlain, to avoid fresh taxation. This point was capitalised on by Salisbury, who argued that a reformed militia could obtain the same number of men and save the exchequer £750,000 per annum.¹⁷⁶

To overcome the political deadlock in Cabinet, Balfour circulated a separate memorandum in June 1904. Representing the opinion of the CID, he suggested that the Militia could be retained and used to relieve garrisons across the empire. This would free up regular reinforcements for India and enable the Militia to undergo extensive training in preparation

¹⁷³ TNA, CAB37/68/19, 'Defects in the existing system of Infantry organization and recruitment, Part II', 1st February 1904.

¹⁷⁴ TNA, CAB38/4/40, 'Strength of the Regular Army and Auxiliary Forces, having regard to peace and war requirements', 1st May 1904; TNA, CAB38/5/65, 'Army reform and the military needs of the Empire', 4th June 1904; TNA, CAB38/10/90, 54th and 58th CID meeting, 15th August and 22nd November 1904; Williams, *Defending the Empire*, pp. 50-51.

¹⁷⁵ TNA, CAB37/68/21, 'Remarks of various officers on the memorandum relating to some defects in the existing system', 8th February 1904.

¹⁷⁶ TNA, CAB37/70/59, 'Scheme for the Militia', 22nd April 1904; TNA, CAB37/70/59, 'Reorganization of the Army', 22nd April 1904; TNA, CAB37/71/80, 'Army organization', 14th June 1904; *Harts Army List*, 1904, pp. 895 and 903; Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', p. 235; Williams, *Defending the Empire*, pp. 46-47.

for active service.¹⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Arnold-Forster continuously refused to compromise with the Cabinet and would not replace his short-service army with the Militia for two reasons. Firstly, he doubted the military value of auxiliary troops in modern warfare and felt that his opinion had been justified by the recent findings of the Norfolk Commission. Published in May 1904, the report noted that the Militia, under its current system of administration and training, was unable to successfully face a first-class enemy.¹⁷⁸ Secondly, the changes Arnold-Forster recommended had been formulated over the previous decade, with some of his ideas stretching back to 1892. Therefore, he came to the problem with a preconceived solution and was not interested in changing it to soothe political opinion.

After a year of stalemate, Balfour acquiesced and promised Arnold-Forster that he could trial eight short-service battalions in June 1905.¹⁷⁹ Yet, the scheme was littered with numerous practical issues. Firstly, it required an additional 1,546 officers and 4,500 NCOs. Arnold-Forster offered little guidance on how to expand the officer corps and presumed, with little justification, that all NCOs for his home army could be sourced from long-service soldiers extending their service beyond nine years. Secondly, Arnold-Forster never detailed how he could increase the rate of enlistment and provide the estimated 13,280 and 27,000 general and home service infantry recruits needed per annum, respectively. It was almost certain to fail, as the number of men recruited annually for the entire army between 1904 and 1913 never reached Arnold-Forster's inflated target. Therefore, it ran the risk of creating two armies that competed over the same limited pool of manpower. Considering the number of men that were unwilling to extend their service under Brodrick's scheme, it was unlikely that sufficient recruits could be found for the long-service army whilst short term recruitment was available. Indeed, this was the biggest concern for the Army Council, who argued that dual recruitment would compromise the army and its ability to defend the empire. Although the Army Council were never fully open about their opposition, they refused to endorse Arnold-Forster's scheme once they found out it lacked Cabinet support.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ TNA, CAB 38/5/65, 'Army reform and the military needs of the Empire', 4th June 1904.

¹⁷⁸ *Norfolk Report*, p. 2; Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', p. 232; Williams, *Defending the Empire*, p. 46.

¹⁷⁹ Beckett, 'H.O. Arnold-Forster and the Volunteers', p. 54.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 57-58; TNA, CAB37/68/19, 'Defects in the existing system of Infantry organization and recruitment, Part II', 1st February 1904; TNA, CAB37/78/107, 'Army Reorganization: Objections of the three military

Overall, both Brodrick and Arnold-Forster were unable to implement significant change and the Conservative government had failed to enact any meaningful reform. With the accession of the new Liberal government, Richard Haldane was appointed as the new Secretary of State for War in December 1905. He would implement a series of significant reforms that not only envisaged the creation of an organised field force, but a reinforcement policy that could expand and sustain it in war. Similar to Arnold-Forster, Haldane accepted that the primary role of the army was to serve overseas, as the Royal Navy was capable of defending the UK from invasion. Whereas Arnold-Forster had attempted to alter the regular army to meet broader defence strategy, Haldane had focused on restructuring the existing system as best as possible within the arbitrary budget of £28,000,000. In June 1906, Haldane outlined that the army at home had two competing roles to fulfil. It had to provide drafts for imperial garrisons and, simultaneously, be capable of mobilising an organised field force for action abroad. Both, he argued, could be achieved economically through the Cardwell system.¹⁸¹

To support his proposed field force, consisting of six infantry and one cavalry divisions, Haldane aimed to create a strong Army Reserve. Unconvinced by Brodrick's and Arnold-Forster's experimentation, Haldane reverted the length of service for the infantry back to the traditional formula of seven years with the colours and five with the reserve.¹⁸² Yet, this had the unfortunate effect of ratifying the pre-existing role of the reserve as forming, rather than supporting, an expeditionary force. Haldane stressed that 'the bulk of the reserves will be used up in completing fighting units to war establishment on mobilisation, and we must therefore look elsewhere for men to replace wastage of war.'¹⁸³ As will be discussed, this role would be taken up by 'non-regular reservists' in the SR and ER. Nevertheless, this problem was raised in Parliament in 1907 and the Conservative MP, Colonel William Kenyon-Slaney, enquired how an expeditionary force could be reinforced if most reservists were needed to

members of the Army Council to the proposals of the Secretary of State', 10th June 1905; Beckett, 'H.O. Arnold-Forster and the Volunteers', p. 56; Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, pp. 29-30 and 42-45.

¹⁸¹ TNA, CAB37/86/11, 'Considerations governing the peace strength of the Regular Army', 1st February 1907; TNA, CAB38/12/37, 90th CID meeting, 6th July 1906; Spiers, *Haldane*, pp. 80-81.

¹⁸² Hansard, HC, 12th July 1906, Vol. 160, cc. 1094-1106; TNA, CAB38/12/34, 89th CID meeting, 28th June 1906; TNA, CAB38/12/37, 90th CID meeting, 6th July 1906; Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, pp. 44-45; Spiers, *Haldane*, p. 81.

¹⁸³ TNA, CAB37/86/11, 'Peace strength of the Regular Army', 1st February 1907.

form it.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, this had been a point of contention in every debate on army reform since 1901, with MPs disagreeing on the precise purpose of the Army Reserve.¹⁸⁵ Unsurprisingly, the leading critic of this was Arnold-Forster, who relentlessly attacked Haldane's scheme between 1906 and 1908 in Parliament, the press and his publications. In particular, he condemned the decision to abolish nine battalions, as this and the transition to seven years colour service would reduce the size of the professional reserve.¹⁸⁶

Despite its predictability, Arnold-Forster's criticism held an element of truth. The sub-committee of the CID established to evaluate Haldane's scheme in late 1906 stated that the reserve would not be strong enough to mobilise an expeditionary force by 1918.¹⁸⁷ As seen in table 1.1, the continuing flux in the length of service for soldiers, as well as the various reductions and alterations made to the army's establishment, led to an unstable number of soldiers passing into the reserve. Although the total strength of the reserve plateaued by 1910, it covered up the looming crisis. Figures 1.1 and 1.2 portrays a more complicated picture. Section B of the infantry reserve, composed of soldiers who had completed their colour service or chosen to prematurely pass into the reserve, had rapidly increased in strength until 1908. This was fuelled by the introduction of the three year engagement in 1902 and a lack of soldiers willing to extend their service from 1904. Yet, with the adoption of nine and seven years' colour service in 1904 and 1906 respectively, the strength of section B fell by 10,354 between 1908 and 1913. The only soldiers passing into the reserve during this period were those who had enlisted for three years and extended their service to eight between 1902 and 1905. Although Section A, composed of reservists who undertook a liability to be recalled before a general mobilisation, remained stable from 1905, Section D was used to offset the loss in section B. Composed of reservists who had completed their reserve period

¹⁸⁴ Hansard, HC, 10th April 1907, Vol. 172, cc. 257.

¹⁸⁵ Hansard, HC, 13th May 1901, Vol. 93, cc. 1493-1494 and 1499; Hansard, HC, 16th May 1901, Vol. 94, cc. 331, 337 and 343; Hansard, HC, 14th July 1904, Vol. 138, cc. 60, 87-88, 106, 112 and 114-115; Hansard, HC, 3rd April 1905, Vol. 144, cc.182-183; Hansard, HL, 25th June 1901, Vol. 95, cc. 1351, 1358, 1373 and 1377; Hansard, HL, 21st July 1904, Vol. 138, cc. 739.

¹⁸⁶ Hansard, HC, 10th April 1907, Vol. 172, cc. 235-240; Hansard, HC 10th June 1907, Vol. 175, cc. 1129-1137; *The Times*, 9th, 12th, 16th and 31st July, 16th August 1906, 6th and 16th March, 21st May and 16th June 1907; Arnold-Forster, H. O., *Military Needs and Military Policy* (London: Smith and Elder, 1909), pp. 116-117; Arnold-Forster, *The Army in 1906*, pp. 92, 446 and 456-457.

¹⁸⁷ TNA, CAB38/12/57, 'Report of the Sub-Committee appointed by the Prime Minister to consider the scheme of military organization proposed by the Secretary of State for War', 14th December 1906.

and re-engaged for a further four years, Section D more than doubled from 8,860 to 21,816 between 1909 and 1913.¹⁸⁸

Figure 1.1: Composition of the Army Reserve for the Line Infantry on 1st October,

1903-1913.¹⁸⁹

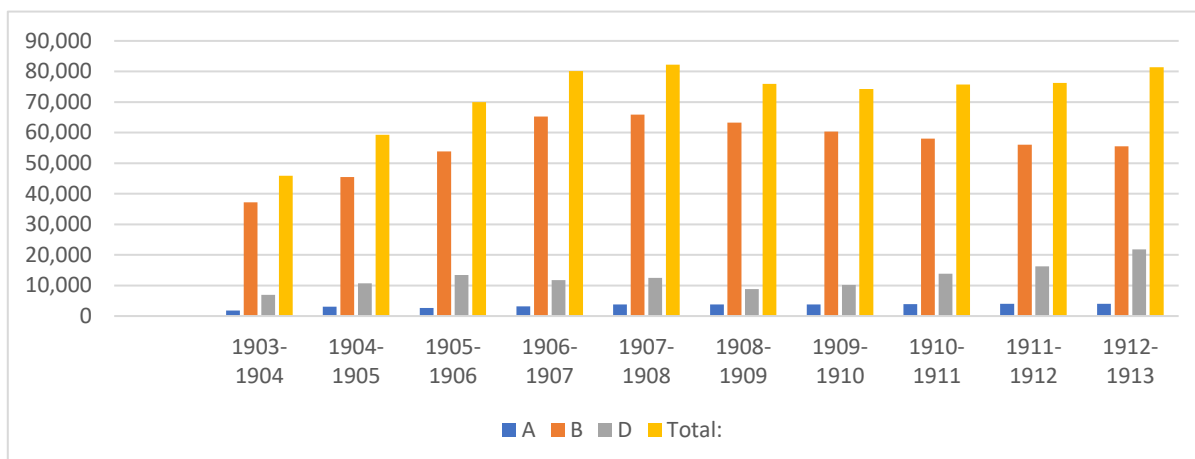
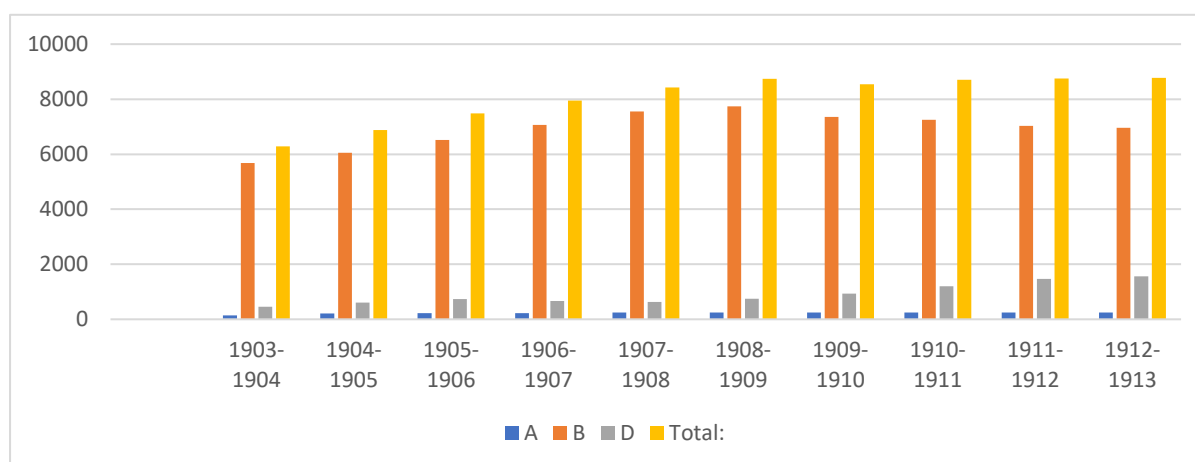


Figure 1.2: Composition of the Army Reserve for the Foot Guard on 1st October,

1903-1913.¹⁹⁰



¹⁸⁸ *General Annual Report on the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1913*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁸⁹ Compiled from; *The General Annual Report of the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1905*, p.109; 1908 (Cd. 3798) *The General Annual Report on the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1907*, p. 101; 1910 (Cd. 5016) *The General Annual Report on the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1909*, p.98; 1912 (Cd. 6065) *The General Annual Report on the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1911*, p. 98; *The General Annual Report on the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1913*, p. 102. For a full statistical breakdown, see Appendix 2.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Although the expansion of section D provided a short term solution, it was unsustainable in relation to the rate the reserve was shrinking. It was estimated that in 1913-1914, 1914-1915 and 1915-1916, 21,283, 22,582 and 23,523 reservists respectively were due to leave after completing their nine year reserve service. Although this would be partially offset by both nine and seven year enlistments simultaneously entering the reserve in 1913-1914 and 1914-1915, those who undertook the former would only serve three years in the reserve. As a result, they would leave the reserve *en masse* in 1916-1917 and 1917-1918, estimated at 14,959 and 13,610, respectively.¹⁹¹ Although the total strength of the reserve was never predicted, it is clear that the warning issued by the sub-committee of the CID was accurate. In comparison, the reserve of the Guards remained relatively stable, as it had retained its traditional engagement period of three years with the colours and nine in the reserve. As a result, the output of reservists was consistent, with changes due to yearly recruitment trends. Thus, it is evident that Brodrick and Arnold-Forster's successive changes caused considerable disruption to the infantry reserve and compromised its long term stability. Still, Haldane himself must take some responsibility, as he did little to act on this warning during his time in office.

Haldane justified the Army Reserve's role by enlisting 'non-regular reservists' to be used for drafts. In his first memorandum in January 1906, Haldane stressed the importance of maintaining the strength of an expeditionary force once it had been deployed. This, he claimed, could only be accomplished by creating a large reserve to cover wastage and, in June 1906, proposed to the CID that the Militia perform this role. Although he had yet to envisage a new system, Haldane explained that once the Militia's organisation and liability were altered, they could supply drafts to the expeditionary force. This was an important development in creating a reinforcement policy as, until this point, the provision of drafts had received scant attention in military reform. Brodrick had reduced the army's drafting capacity by abolishing the Militia Reserve and though Arnold-Forster and Balfour had discussed it, they never truly envisaged a way to adequately recruit, train and draft soldiers. Yet, it must be noted that the decision to use the Militia in this capacity was underpinned by reducing expenditure. The use of militiamen as drafts enabled Haldane to retain the Cardwell system and economise on the regular reserve, as, 'men so engaged would be paid for one-twelfth of

¹⁹¹ Ibid, pp. 11-12.

their time instead of all year round'. Regardless of the reasoning, the proposal drew criticism from the First Lord of the Admiralty and Chancellor of the Exchequer, the 2nd Lord Tweedmouth and H. H. Asquith, respectively. Although they were less dogmatic than Cabinet opposition in the recent Conservative government, they raised several important points. Firstly, Lord Tweedmouth argued that the Militia could not be used for wartime expansion if it had been bled white for the line. This point was echoed by Lieutenant-General Sir John French, stating that provision for wartime expansion had to be made. Haldane indicated that the newly proposed TF would perform this role and, as a result, would not impact on his current proposal. As will be discussed, the decision to revert from this position compromised Haldane's broader reinforcement policy and would cause significant chaos between 1914 and 1916. Yet, the more immediate problem was Asquith's question over the political feasibility of Haldane's scheme. Pointedly, he asked the likelihood of the Militia accepting these changes and, if unwilling, whether a bill could be passed through Parliament.¹⁹²

This was a serious point as Haldane had failed to gain the support of most Militia COs. In June 1906, a War Office committee under the leadership of Lord Esher had failed to elicit any support for the new scheme. Although Major-General Frederick Stopford, the Director of Military Training, suggested the Militia may be asked to serve overseas as complete battalions, COs were told they must accept the obligation of sending drafts to the regular army. Unsurprisingly, the Militia representatives were not willing to comply and argued that any attempt to do so would ruin recruitment. Though willing to undertake foreign service, all 14 representatives stated that the Militia had to be sent as complete units, with only four of them willing, in exceptional circumstances, to dispatch service companies as drafts. As Esher summarised, 'The Army Council regarded the latter arrangement [drafting] as essential, but the Militia officers were strenuously opposed to it'.¹⁹³ Meetings continued throughout the Autumn, but Militia COs could not be persuaded to adopt this obligation.

Thus, without any support from the Militia, Haldane decided to 'abolish' it and replace it with the SR. Its primary role was to provide drafts to cover wastage and, based on the experiences of the South African War, designed to be a mechanism that could continuously

¹⁹² TNA, CAB38/12/34, 89th CID meeting, 28th June 1906; Spiers, *Haldane*, p. 77.

¹⁹³ 1907 (Cd. 3513), *Report on the War Office Committee appointed to discuss certain Militia Questions with Representative Officers of Militia*; TNA, CAB38/12/34, 89th CID meeting, 28th June 1906.

recruit, train and draft men in war. Initially, Haldane proposed to create 74 SR battalions to supply drafts to each regiment of the line. In peace, it had an establishment of 500 and was structured around a small cohort of permanent officers and NCOs. Men enlisted as Special Reservists for six years and, after six months of preliminary training, returned to civilian life for the rest of their engagement. If war broke out, Special Reservists were recalled and used to supply the regular army with drafts. Due to this, SR battalions existed as a skeleton cadre in peace and only expanded once a year, when it organised a short, annual training camp of 15 and, later, 28 days, for Special Reservists. On mobilisation, an SR battalion would be expanded to house reservists, new recruits, adolescent and unfit soldiers, where they could be trained and drafted. Notably, the size and number of reserve units had been determined by financial considerations, with Haldane arguing that the state could only afford one reserve battalion for every pair of regular battalions. Yet, Haldane's scheme was endorsed by the CGS, Sir Neville Gerald Lyttelton, who considered it a distinct improvement on the current position of the Militia.¹⁹⁴

Collectively, the SR was expected to cover the first six months of wastage during a continental war, estimated at 56,000 men.¹⁹⁵ Haldane had requested the War Office's Directorate of Military Training to analyse previous conflicts and ascertain an approximate wastage rate. Notably, the analysis demonstrated the large upscale in attrition, caused by combat, since the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. Although British forces suffered a wastage rate of roughly five percent through combat during the early stages of the South African War, most casualties and deaths were due to disease and, for that reason, discounted. Instead, the study focused on the recent Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905, as both sides deployed a modern military force. The Japanese Army lost 34 percent of their force alone during the passage of the Yalu river and, overall, suffered an annual wastage rate of 95 percent. In comparison, the Russian Army recorded 238,996 casualties and is estimated to have suffered a similar rate of attrition. Discounting the experience of the BEF in 1914 and 1918, this accurately predicted the annual wastage rate of trench warfare and the possibility of sudden spikes in casualties. Yet, for no discernible reason, the estimate was lowered by the

¹⁹⁴ 1909 (Cd. 4493), *The General Annual Report of the British Army for the Year ending 30th September 1908*, p. 11; TNA, CAB37/86/11, 'Considerations governing the peace strength of the Regular Army', 1st February 1907; TNA, CAB38/13/10, 95th CID meeting, 21st February 1907; Spiers, *Haldane*, p. 86.

¹⁹⁵ TNA, CAB 38/12/30, 'Organization and administration of the military forces', 18th June 1906.

Directorate of Military Training to a figure between 65 to 75 percent, per annum.¹⁹⁶ This was broken down further by the *Field Service Regulations, Part II*, in 1909, which estimated an approximate wastage rate of 80 percent per annum for the infantry. Cavalry and Mounted Rifles were 70 percent, whilst the artillery and other supporting arms varied from 20 to 60 percent.¹⁹⁷ As will be seen in Chapters two and four, this new calculation was woefully inaccurate and led to a drafting crisis during the first four months of the Great War.

Regardless, Haldane's ability to abolish the Militia and replace it with the SR was due to a weakened Militia lobby, which had shrunk in size after the 1905 General Election.¹⁹⁸ It did not pass through Parliament without alteration, however, as it had to be moderated in accordance with criticism. Unsurprisingly, when the Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill was introduced to Parliament in March 1907, it was condemned by the Conservative front bench and Militia lobby. Notably, the latter focused its criticism on training at regimental depots, arguing that six months of instruction could not prepare a man for combat, nor foster a regimental *esprit de corps*.¹⁹⁹ Colonel William Kenyon-Slaney aptly summarised this position by describing the SR as a conglomerate mass of men; 'They would not be trained by any officer attached to any particular regiment... and everything that was of value in a regiment would be remarkably absent in their training.'²⁰⁰ Balfour and the Conservative front bench also provided a coherent opposition throughout the debate and focused their criticism upon the proposed method of wartime expansion. Collectively, they argued that the TF was incapable of expanding the regular army quickly, as Territorials required a minimum of six months training after mobilisation. This would leave the regular army without immediate reinforcements and, if a crisis forced the SR to be sent, the machinery to produce drafts would collapse. Yet, Parliamentary resistance was disjointed, as Balfour and other Unionists blamed the Militia for not accepting the obligation of drafting and thus forcing Haldane to abolish it.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁶ Spiers, *Haldane*, pp. 85-86.

¹⁹⁷ *Field Service Regulations, 1909, Part II* (with 1912 amendments) (HMSO: London, 1912), p. 56.

¹⁹⁸ Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p. 119.

¹⁹⁹ Hansard, HC, 9th April 1907, Vol. 172, cc. 83-189; Hansard, HC, 10th April 1907, Vol. 172, cc. 232-94; Hansard, HC, 23rd April 1907, Vol. 172, cc. 1584-1696; Hansard, HC, 28th May 1907, Vol. 174, cc. 1481-1579; Hansard, HC, 10th June 1907, Vol. 175, cc. 1102-1191; Hansard, HL, 21st March 1907, Vol. 171, cc. 1212-1258.

²⁰⁰ Hansard, HC, 10th June 1907, Vol. 175, cc. 1148.

²⁰¹ Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', p. 241; Williams, *Defending Empire*, pp. 106-107.

Although this part of Haldane's scheme passed with little difficulty, Balfour did force Haldane to alter one aspect of the SR. Originally, Haldane proposed that the Irish Militia be retained and modified for the same role as the SR, as he had not intended the TF to be extended to Ireland. This was due to the peculiar constitutional and political situation in Ireland, where the Volunteer movement had not resumed in 1859. Despite flourishing in parts of the 18th century, the Irish Volunteers had challenged British control in Ireland. Therefore, they were disbanded and replaced by the Irish Militia in 1793. Yet, the Catholic composition of the Militia had raised questions about its political reliability, and whether it could be used to uphold a Protestant system. Though they were reliable in suppressing the Rebellion of 1798, British suspicion varied over time and was often determined by political factors, including the rise of Fenianism and periods of extended violence throughout the 19th century. As a result, embodied Irish Militia battalions, bar those recruited in the Protestant area of Ulster, were posted to garrisons outside of Ireland. Considering this remained a topic of debate within the War Office until 1909, it is not surprising that the TF, bar eight Officer Training Corps (OTC) units, were not extended to Ireland in 1908.²⁰²

Yet, this anomaly gave Balfour an opportunity to demand the entire SR scheme be scrapped. If the Irish Militia could be retained and reformed, he argued, then the same process could apply to the Militia across the UK. To avoid political contention, Haldane immediately converted the Irish Militia into the SR and increased the number of units retained. These units, initially numbering 15 and, later, rising to 27, were classified as ER battalions.²⁰³ Seemingly, this addition was due to the disproportionately high number of Irish Militia units, caused by the absence of an Irish Volunteer Corps. Whereas British Regiments typically had two regular battalions, one Militia battalion and one to three Volunteer battalions, Irish Regiments had between three to four Militia battalions.²⁰⁴ Therefore, the ER was added to accommodate this, as 12 of the original 15 battalions were earmarked for Irish

²⁰² TNA, WO32/7801, 'Allotment of SR Battalions of Irish Regiments', 1909; Bartlett, Thomas, 'An End to Moral Economy': The Irish Militia Disturbances of 1793', *Past and Present*, 99 (1983), pp. 41-64; Bowman, Timothy and Butler, William, 'Ireland' in Beckett, Ian F. W. (ed.), *Citizen Soldiers and the British Empire, 1837-1902* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), pp. 41-42, 49-51 and 53-54; Butler, *The Irish Amateur Military*, pp. 12-20.

²⁰³ Hansard, HC, 28th May 1907, Vol. 174, cc. 1510-1511 and 1528; Hansard, HC, 3rd June 1907, Vol. 175, cc. 352; Hansard, HC, 10th June 1907, Vol. 175, cc. 1135-1136, 1158 and 1177; Hansard, HC, 17th June 1907, Vol. 176, cc. 182; Mitchinson, K. W., *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army, 1908-1919* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 205; Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', pp. 241-242.

²⁰⁴ Butler, *The Irish Amateur Military Tradition*, pp. 20-21.

Regiments, with the Royal Irish Rifles, Leinster Regiment, Royal Munster Fusiliers, and Royal Dublin Fusiliers being allocated two each. Thus, the ER was not created for a military purpose, nor did it fit into Haldane's original reinforcement policy. Instead, it was shaped by the historical legacy of Ireland and purely designed to forestall a political backlash.²⁰⁵

Unsurprisingly, the sudden addition of the ER led to several questions over its role and function within the broader reinforcement policy. Notably, the War Office committee established to discuss the organisation of the SR had not been consulted by Haldane about this and had little idea regarding the purpose of the ER. This was reflected in their final report in October 1907, when the committee vaguely acknowledged that there would be some difference in the roles assigned to the SR and ER.²⁰⁶ It took until 1910 for this to be officially resolved, with the latter defined as separate with a role akin to the 'Old Militia'. Although it could train and dispatch drafts, the committee recommended an increased establishment of 750 and a reduced training period of three months. This, the committee agreed, would reflect the change in role from draft finding to providing garrisons.²⁰⁷ Yet, this report merely confirmed the promises given to Militia Colonels regarding the regimental integrity of ER battalions in 1907 and 1908. Though forced upon Haldane, the ER was an awkward force that did not fit into his broader reinforcement policy. It lacked a clear role and, as feared by Militia Colonels, the ER defaulted to its drafting role as soon as war broke out in 1914.²⁰⁸

Despite the addition of the ER, 23 Militia battalions in England, Ireland and Wales were selected for disbandment. It is unclear what logic was used to determine the number of battalions retained for the ER and, in turn, which ones were to be disbanded.²⁰⁹ Unsurprisingly, regiments that only had one Militia regiment were automatically retained, as they were turned into the regiment's sole SR battalion. For regiments with multiple Militia battalions, Stoneman suggests selection was based upon eliminating the most inefficient units, as 15 of the battalions chosen had a strength of 500 or less. However, as Timothy Bowman, William Butler and Michael Wheatley claim, there were several anomalies within

²⁰⁵ James, E. A., *British Regiments, 1914-1918* (London: Samson Books, 1978), pp. 124-125.

²⁰⁶ TNA, WO33/439, 'Final Report of the Committee on the Provision and Organisation of the SR Required to Supplement the Regular Army', 26th October 1907.

²⁰⁷ TNA, WO33/489, 'Interim report of the Committee on the Organisation of the SR', 14th April 1910; TNA, WO33/505, 'Final report of the Committee on the Organisation of the SR', 14th December 1910.

²⁰⁸ Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p. 107.

²⁰⁹ TNA, WO 123/49, Army Order of 23rd December 1907.

this, as some Irish battalions selected for disbandment, 'were certainly not all failing or under-strength, nor drawn from counties with the smallest population'. Though it is impossible to verify, as only battalions selected for disbandment had their strength published in January 1908, there were clearly gaps; the 5th Royal Irish Fusiliers and 3rd Royal Irish Regiment, both selected for disbandment, had a strength of 229 and 621, respectively. Stoneman also suggests that regimental seniority played a role within this process. Yet, there were clearly inconsistencies, as the 3rd Devonshire Regiment, 3rd Royal Irish Regiment, 3rd Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and 3rd Connaught Rangers were selected for disbandment. As will be discussed, this was done in the face of local opposition and, considering Haldane's lack of sympathy for the Militia as an institution, it seems regimental seniority played little to no role within the process. None were particularly weak either, as they had a strength of 470, 621, 560 and 383, respectively. Nor, within the context of Irish regiments, was selection based upon loyalty, as Militia battalions that served overseas in the South African War, such as 9th King's Royal Rifle Corps, were disbanded.²¹⁰

More promising, however, is Stoneman's argument that Militia battalions were more likely to survive if they had been integrated into their territorial regiments. Introduced by Cardwell in 1873 and consolidated by Childers in 1881, brigade and, later, regimental depots, were meant to unite both regular and Militia regiments together, as part of one territorial regiment. However, several Militia battalions had retained their independence and stayed at their traditional headquarters.²¹¹ Charles Repington, the Military Correspondent for *The Times*, claims this was a critical factor, as 17 of the 23 Militia battalions selected for disbandment had independent headquarters.²¹² Indeed, this argument is supported by announcements made by the Army Council and Haldane. In relation to the former, the Special Army Order of 23rd December 1907 stated that the role of regimental depots was to recruit and train Special Reservists.²¹³ This statement was supported by Haldane, who outlined in Parliament the logic behind which Militia battalions were disbanded. The Conservative MP, Sir Michael Hicks Beach, asked why the 4th Gloucestershire Regiment, based at Cirencester

²¹⁰ 1908 (Cd. 3935), *Enlistment in Militia and SR*; Bowman, Timothy, Butler, William and Wheatley, Michael, *The Disparity of Sacrifice: Irish Recruitment to the British Armed Forces, 1914-1918* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), p. 35; Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', p. 243

²¹¹ Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', pp. 56, 58, 119 and 242-244.

²¹² *The Times*, 21st January 1908.

²¹³ TNA, WO123/49, Appendix IV of Army Order of 23rd December 1907.

and only 118 short of its establishment, was ordered to disband, when the 3rd Gloucestershire Regiment was understrength by 443 men. Although Stoneman puts this down to regimental seniority, Haldane stated that the 3rd Gloucestershire Regiment was kept because it was already at the regimental depot in Bristol and, as a result, able to, 'fulfil the administrative conditions which will in future be required of the majority of the Special Reserve battalions'.²¹⁴ Although a seemingly arbitrary method of selecting units, this made sense considering Haldane's broader goals. Not only did he want to tie regular and SR units closer together, but housing both together at the regimental depot helped to create additional economies. Indeed, this was the original intent of the localisation scheme initiated by the Cardwell-Childers' reforms and Haldane had merely continued it.

Nevertheless, there were some anomalies within the selection process. In Ireland, at least one Militia battalion with separate headquarters was retained for every regiment. As mentioned, this was due to an excess number of Militia battalions and, as a result, was unlikely to have played a significant role in determining which units were disbanded. Although less common, this also occurred in the rest of the UK. For instance, the 6th Royal Fusiliers, 4th Bedfordshire Regiment, 3rd Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment), 3rd Durham Light Infantry and 4th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, stationed in separate headquarters to their regimental depot, were retained. Yet, six of the battalions disbanded, including the 4th King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment), 4th Norfolk Regiment, 4th Somerset Light Infantry, 4th Yorkshire Regiment, 4th Border Regiment and 4th Essex Regiment, were stationed at their regimental depot. Although some units, such as the 4th Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment), subsequently transferred to their regimental depot after converting into the SR and ER, inconsistencies remained. For instance, the 4th Durham Light Infantry retained a separate headquarters at Barnard Castle but sent new recruits to the regimental depot in Newcastle for their preliminary six months training. Yet, others, such as the 4th Bedfordshire Regiment, retained their independence and were able to continue recruiting and training men at their traditional headquarters in Hartford.²¹⁵ Curiously, this was contrary to what Haldane had told Captain James Craig, Irish Unionist MP and Captain in the 5th Royal Irish Rifles, in April 1908. After lobbying for the 3rd and 5th Royal

²¹⁴ *Gloucester Journal*, 8th February 1908; Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', p. 243.

²¹⁵ TNA, WO123/49, Appendix IV of Army Order of 23rd December 1907; *Harts Army List*, 1907, pp. 670-702, 1911, pp. 291-518; Bowman, Butler and Wheatley, *The Disparity of Sacrifice*, p. 37.

Irish Rifles to retain the privilege of recruiting and training men at their local headquarters in Newtownards and Downpatrick respectively, Haldane stated all men must be sent to the regimental depot at Belfast for their preliminary six months training.²¹⁶ Whilst the selection of Militia battalions was partly decided by the extent it had integrated within the territorial regiment, it was clearly only one of several competing factors that determined the outcome.

This decision sparked a wide range of reactions across the country. For instance, the 3rd Devonshire Regiment, based at Plymouth, appears to have attracted little attention from the press beyond specific facts and a brief acknowledgement of regret. Colonel R. A. Moore-Stevens, former CO of 3rd Devonshire Regiment, expressed regret that the battalion and, the Militia as a whole, were to disappear. Yet, he, 'endeavoured to persuade all to support Mr. Haldane, who was depending on the patriotism of the country to carry out his scheme successfully.'²¹⁷ In Chester, local opinion was more disgruntled with the proposed disbandment of one of the five Volunteer battalions, claiming it an 'insult to the city'.²¹⁸ On the other hand, some communities were resilient and protested against Haldane's decisions. In Buckinghamshire, two meetings were arranged in January 1908 at High Wycombe and Aylesbury. Chaired by the town Mayor and Lord Rothschild respectively, both claimed that there were little grounds to disband the 3rd Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry (Former King's Own Royal Buckinghamshire Militia), as it was numerically stronger and senior to the 4th battalion. Furthermore, it would destroy a historical regiment and deprive Buckinghamshire of its only link to the regular army. Both agreed to send a formal petition against disbandment to the War Office and was supported by other notables, including the Earl of Buckinghamshire and Lord Carrington. Similar protests emerged for other battalions, including the 4th Suffolk Regiment (Former Cambridge Militia), 4th Royal Welsh Fusiliers (former Royal Caernarvonshire Rifles), 4th South Wales Borderers (former Royal Montgomeryshire Rifles) and 4th Yorkshire Regiment (former North Yorkshire Rifles).

²¹⁶ Hansard, HC, 1st April 1908, Vol. 187, cc. 490-492; Bowman, Butler and Wheatley, *The Disparity of Sacrifice*, p. 35.

²¹⁷ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 24th December 1907, 6th January, 7th February and 18th April 1908; *Herts Army List*, 1905, p. 674.

²¹⁸ *Cheshire Observer*, 18th January 1908.

Collectively, they sent a delegation to Haldane to retain these units in January 1908 but failed to change his opinion.²¹⁹

Despite this, the creation of the SR represented a significant development for the British Army. It underpinned the development of a coherent reinforcement policy and provided, for the first time, a robust military apparatus capable of covering battlefield wastage. Yet, the conversion of the Militia into the SR has been presented in the historiography as a period of transition, rather than a distinct break with the past. Undoubtedly, there is legitimacy in the arguments presented by Bowman, Connelly and Stoneman when comparing the socio-economic composition of the Militia and SR, as well as its ability to recruit and retain men. The Militia, with an establishment of 131,583, was 25,619 short of its establishment in 1903. By 1907, this has deteriorated further and, with a reduced establishment 130,737, was understrength by 37,397. This downward trend was merely accelerated when the Militia became the SR, as seen by the difficulty of convincing militiamen to transfer across. Although 1,952 officers and 48,756 men transferred to the SR, 301 officers resigned and 9,818 militiamen took a free discharge, with another 138 officers and 8,386 men continuing as militiamen until the end of their engagement. By 1913, the strength of the SR had dwindled to 59,065 and even this may have been inflated, as reservists, who were already under an obligation to serve in a national emergency, could enlist into SR battalions from 1911.²²⁰

Furthermore, the SR, like the Militia, continued to haemorrhage recruits to the line and struggled to retain those who had finished their service. In 1907, the Militia had a strength of 82,720 and passed on 12,133 recruits to the line. Yet, in 1913, the SR passed on 9,235 recruits, despite having a much lower strength of 59,065. As a result, the number of men completing their engagement and re-engaging remained low throughout the period. Out of 16,246 men formally discharged from the Militia between October 1906 and September 1907, only 7,569, or 46.6 percent, had completed their engagement. This trend continued and had fallen to an all-time low before the outbreak of the Great War. Between September 1912 and

²¹⁹ *Buckinghamshire Examiner*, 10th and 17th January 1908; *Bucks Herald*, 11th January 1908; *Cambridge Independent Press*, 10th January 1908; *Daily Telegraph and Courier*, 4th February 1908; *Montgomeryshire Echo*, 4th January 1908; *South Bucks Standard*, 10th January 1908; *The Times*, 4th February 1908; Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', p. 244.

²²⁰ Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, pp. 116 and 120-121; Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', pp. 129-131, 222 and 248-249.

October 1913, only 2,807, or 34.9 percent, of 8,044 Special Reservists formally discharged had completed their engagement. Out of this, only 1,168 men re-engaged for another six year period. Although this was boosted by 2,486 men re-engaging before the end of their service, they only represented a small proportion of force.²²¹

Moreover, the SR continued to attract adolescents. Although the Army Council hoped the SR would appeal to a broader range of men, the age of recruits entering the SR continued to drop. From October 1908 to September 1909, 79.7 percent of new recruits were under the age of 20 and, between October 1912 and September 1913, this had risen to 86.1 percent.²²² Even though this deterred older men from enlisting, the nature of the force ensured this for several reasons. Firstly, recruitment continued to centre on small market towns traditionally tied to the Militia, despite the fact that Britain was one of the most urbanised societies in the world. Secondly, the SR lacked public recognition, as the ancient links between the Militia and landed gentry, and the patronage that had come with it, had been largely destroyed during the transition. Thirdly, the Yeomanry continued to act as competition for recruits within rural communities. Traditionally, the Yeomanry had linked landed gentry and rural society together in 19th century and had relied upon farming communities to provide a large proportion of recruits. Despite the assumption that the Yeomanry was defined by feudalism, with the landed elite commanding their tenants and estate workers, George Hay's research demonstrates that the force had a much broader social composition by the end of the 19th century. Although a sizable proportion still came from the farming community, it mirrored the Volunteer movement from 1859 and attracted a sizable proportion of middle and upper working class recruits from market towns and urban areas, including professionals, small business owners and artisans. These trends were merely accelerated by the South African War, which saw the size of the force double from 9,413 to 22,942. This phenomenon is evident in the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry, which had seen a steady expansion of its socio-economic profile between 1900 and 1914. Though half of its recruits had farming backgrounds, there was a large uplift in skilled working classes. In 'A' Squadron, for example, a number of 'new profession and trades' had emerged, with 'an architect, three dental

²²¹ *Annual Report of the British Army for the Year ending 30th September 1913*, pp. 109-110; Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p. 52; Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', pp. 129-131 and 249-253.

²²² *Annual Report of the British Army for the Year ending 30th September 1909*, p. 108; *Annual Report of the British Army for the Year ending 30th September 1913*, p. 112; Stoneman, 'The Reformed British Militia', p. 252.

assistants, an electrician and a telegraphist' enlisting between 1902 and 1914. In comparison, the 3rd Dorset Regiment, which was based in the market town of Dorchester, was one of the worst recruiting regiments in the country and, in June 1908, only had a strength of 239 other ranks. The Yeomanry's broader appeal, combined with the continued patronage from 'social heavy weights' and the aristocracy, ensured it attracted a proportion of middle class and 'respectable working class' men in rural communities until 1914.²²³

The loss of traditional support was exacerbated by the lack of interest shown in the SR by the government and regular army. In relation to the former, the government was accused by MPs and the press of taking little interest in the SR. It had received little attention in Parliament since 1907 and several SR officers, such as Sir Arthur Griffith-Boscawen, Conservative MP and the CO 3rd Royal West Kent Regiment, stressed the difficulties the force faced in 1912. He outlined the difficulty they experienced in securing officers and recruits, and felt the government took little interest in their plight. Instead, the government focused their attention on the TF and Lieutenant-Colonel D. F. Boles, Conservative MP and the CO 3rd Devonshire Regiment, criticised the government for undermining the SR by giving the Territorials unique financial benefits, such as a separation allowance. Despite a request for this to be reviewed, little was altered; these problems were left unaddressed and the SR received little official support. As will be discussed, this was due to the TF and its image becoming embroiled in a larger debate over conscription. Whilst the TF was recognised as Haldane's creation and seen as a benchmark to assess his organisational reforms, its success was critical to championing the voluntary principle in the UK. Unsurprisingly, this overshadowed the SR and absorbed the bulk of the Liberal government's attention.²²⁴

Furthermore, little was done to foster a strong relationship between regular and SR units at the regimental level. Although the Cardwell-Childers reforms of 1868-1881 had linked and territorialised regular and militia regiments together, it had done little to create a close relationship between the two forces. As David French claims, the linking of regiments had

²²³ 1903 (Cd. 1417), *Annual Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting for the Year 1902*, p. 43; Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, pp. 116 and 137; Hay, George Murray, *The Yeomanry Cavalry and Military Identities in Rural Britain, 1815-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 48-50, 58, 73, 84-93, 95-96, and 106-107; Mitchinson, K. W., *Defending Albion*, p. 16.

²²⁴ *Army and Navy Gazette*, 26th November 1910 and 4th July 1914; *Broad Arrow*, 17th April 1914; *Morning Post*, 29th December 1909; Hansard, HC, 16th July 1912, Vol. 41, cc. 334-360; *Herts Army List*, 1912, p. 326; Spiers, *Haldane*, p. 161.

primarily benefitted the regulars and, despite some successes, failed to overcome the legacy of division and suspicion between both forces. Despite Haldane's intention to overcome this and weld them closer together, regular units continued to take little interest in the SR. However, there were some material benefits, including the attachment of regular officers for duty with SR battalions. For instance, the 2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers had four captains and four Lieutenants attached to the 4th and 5th Royal Munster Fusiliers in 1910. Although considered a 'great advantage' by Lieutenant-Colonel Griffith-Boscawen, it did not automatically create a strong relationship between regular and SR battalions, as much depended upon the attitude and willingness of regular officers. For instance, Captain H. F. N. Jourdain of the 2nd Connaught Rangers was attached to the 3rd Connaught Rangers for an extended period of time and played a significant role in the battalion. Attached in September 1907, Jourdain was appointed Adjutant and remained in that post until he departed four years later. He returned for a second tour of duty at the rank of Major in February 1913 and only left the battalion when ordered to form the nucleus of the 5th Connaught Rangers in August 1914. Yet, the length of his attachment was unusual, as most officers were periodically cycled out and replaced. Furthermore, SR COs suspected regular units of abusing this relationship and using it as an opportunity to remove undesirable officers from their command.²²⁵ For instance, the CO 5th Royal Irish Rifles, Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. Wallace, complained about Captain J. C. Bowen-Colthurst in April 1909 after he was involved in an argument with Captain and Honorary Quartermaster Alexander Henderson. Bowen-Colthurst was described as having a 'peculiar temperament' and was clearly snobbish, as he told Henderson, a militiaman promoted from the ranks, 'to 'keep his place''.²²⁶

Lastly, the initial demand of six months training, followed by annual refresher courses of 28 days, barred men in steady employment from enlisting. Attempts were made to overcome this, with full-time workers only required to complete two weeks of training at a time convenient to them. However, this failed to resolve the problem, as only 2,534 soldiers across 81 battalions served on this type of enlistment between October 1911 and September 1912. Yet, on the surface, there appears to have been some local success, as the 5th Royal

²²⁵ Hansard, HC, 16th July 1912, Vol. 41, cc. 334-335; TNA, WO79/40, 3rd Connaught Rangers service digest, 17th September 1911 and 30th December 1912; *Harts Army List*, 1909, p. 345; Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, pp. 110 and 116; French, David, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People, c. 1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 204-208 and 214.

²²⁶ Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p. 118.

Dublin Fusiliers was noted as having 419 men enlisted under these conditions in September 1913. Although no employment records survive for the battalion, some have for the 4th Royal Dublin Fusiliers between 1881 and 1908. In Dublin, a fifth of recruits were employed by four companies, namely Jacob's Biscuits, the Guinness Brewery, Dublin Gas Company and Dublin Tramway Company. Not all were employed as labourers and a sizable proportion of these men were clerks and artisans, which amounted to 19.2 and 14.3 percent of militiamen, respectively. Consequently, most men were not unemployed, as suspected, but in steady, full-time employment in the city. Although it is possible that a similar situation existed within the 5th Royal Dublin Fusiliers and full-time workers, under these new conditions, were able to join the SR, it is more likely that men simply had no other choice. As mentioned, the TF had not been established in Ireland and, as a result, men had little choice beyond enlisting into the SR and, by extension, the Irish Yeomanry, which had been reformed and absorbed by the former in 1900 and 1908, respectively. Thus, rather than the success of a new type of engagement, Irishman simply had no other choice and picked the best option available to them.²²⁷

Despite similarities between the Militia and SR, both analyses end in 1914 and, due to the influence of social history, assessed change through recruitment trends. Although important, it is crucial to analyse the SR from an administrative and military perspective, as part of Haldane's broader reinforcement policy. Indeed, when considering the roles assigned to the Militia and SR, there is a clear distinction. Previously, the Militia had no definitive role. It was vital for providing home defence but, simultaneously, used in an emergency for wartime expansion. Militiamen had no obligation to serve overseas and any attempt to use them in such a manner, as seen during the South African War, led to inefficient, *ad hoc* measures. In comparison, the SR had been given a clear role and was part of a clearly defined reinforcement policy. The Army Reserve was to be used to form the expeditionary force, whilst the SR had been designed to train drafts and cover wastage. Although a 'skeleton' cadre in peace, the SR provided the basis of a robust organisation that, in war, could recruit, train and draft large quantities of manpower under extreme stress. As the *Army and Navy Gazette* summarised in July 1914, 'the role assigned to this new force, the SR, was far and away of greater importance to the success of our military system in war than any that had hitherto

²²⁷ 1913 (Cd. 6656), *Annual Report of the British Army for the Year ending 30th September 1912*, pp. 13-14; *Annual Report of the British Army for the Year ending 30th September 1913*, pp. 15 and 108; Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, pp. 116 and 139; Butler, *The Irish Amateur Military Tradition*, pp. 85-86.

been so willingly undertaken, above and beyond its responsibilities, by the old constitutional Force, the Militia'.²²⁸ Thus, for the first time in its history, the British Army was supported by an organised training system capable of supplying fully trained drafts in war.

Yet, this critical innovation was undermined by Haldane's failure with the TF. Indeed, the concept of the TF developed throughout 1906 and was a part of Haldane's broader concept of reforming the Volunteers and Yeomanry into an organised volunteer army. The TF had an establishment of 302,199 men and was comprised of 14 infantry divisions and cavalry brigades, with supporting artillery and auxiliary services. Command and training were to be centralised into the War Office, with the latter improved by introducing regular statutory drills, annual training camps of 15 days and a set four year engagement. Control of finances were to be transferred from Volunteer COs to the newly created County Territorial Associations. Partially elected, associations were to be headed by Lord-Lieutenants, local dignitaries and employers. Whilst they would administer the TF, it was represented at the War Office by the newly appointed Director-General of the TF. Although an encroachment on the traditional prerogative of Volunteer COs, it aimed to create a national army that fused army and society together into Haldane's concept of a 'nation in arms'.²²⁹

Most importantly, the TF was framed within a two-tier military organisation that was designed to support the regular army overseas. The expeditionary force, created and sustained by the Army Reserve and SR respectively, was the first line, whilst the TF would undertake wartime expansion and form the second line. Designed to provide, 'the sole means of support and expansion of the professional army on any war engaging the whole of that army', there were some faults. Haldane's intention and public commitment in 1907 to provide the TF with six months of preparatory training before deployment seemed implausible, as any number of situations may have required its immediate dispatch.²³⁰ Furthermore, the decision

²²⁸ *Army and Navy Gazette*, 4th July 1914.

²²⁹ Beckett, Ian F. W., 'The nation in arms', in Beckett, Ian F. W. and Simpson, Keith (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 6-7; Beckett, Ian F. W., *The Rifleman Form: A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement 1859-1908* (Aldershot: The Ogilby Trust, 1982), pp. 227-228; Beckett, Ian F. W., 'The Territorial Force', in Beckett, Ian F. W. and Simpson, Keith (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 128-129.

²³⁰ Hansard, HC, 25th February 1907, Vol. 169, cc. 1301; TNA, CAB37/85/102, 'Army reorganisation', 18th December 1906; TNA, CAB37/86/89, 'General Statement on the subject of the organisation and training of the Territorial Army', 23rd November 1906; Spiers, *Haldane*, pp. 77 and 105.

to task the TF with repelling raids was somewhat counterproductive, as it would ensure any training conducted would be disrupted by patrol and garrison duties. However, the two-tier military system was vital, as it underpinned Haldane's broader reinforcement policy and enabled the British Army, for the first time, to coherently create, expand and sustain an expeditionary force in war.

Yet, Haldane decided to change the role of the TF from wartime expansion to home defence in March 1907. When presenting the Army Estimates to Parliament in February 1907, Haldane outlined the overseas role of the TF and stressed its importance within the two-tier military system. Although he did not specify their liability, he consistently emphasised that the TF would be used for wartime expansion and provide the expeditionary force with well-trained and organised reinforcements. Yet, when the Territorial and Reserve Force Bill was presented to Parliament for its first reading in March 1907, Haldane immediately altered the role of the TF to home defence.²³¹ It has been suggested that this was to forestall political resistance from the Volunteer lobby. Yet, Haldane had known of this beforehand and, despite being a political obstacle to previous Secretaries of State for War, the Volunteer lobby had diminished after the 1905 General Election. Consisting of only 28 MPs, 14 were Liberal and some, such as future Secretary of State for War, Colonel J. E. B. Seely, were in favour of the reforms. Yet, there was growing resistance from Labour and the radical wing of the Liberal party regarding the role and size of the TF. Both, along with elements of the Liberal press, feared it as a precursor to universal military service and, by placing the Territorials in closer connection with the regular army, feared the rise of militarism.²³²

Although this secured political expediency, Haldane's willingness to compromise upon the TF's role undermined his two-tier military system. Whilst the Army Reserve and SR could create and sustain an expeditionary force, it could no longer be expanded in a controlled, organised manner. Recognising the impact this had, Haldane attempted to mitigate this by allowing Territorials to volunteer for foreign service via the Imperial Service Obligation (ISO). Yet, this was not taken up widely and, by 1913, only 1,090 officers and 17,788 men had

²³¹ Hansard, HC, 25th February 1907, Vol. 169, cc.1294-1304.

²³² Beckett, 'H. O. Arnold-Forster and the Volunteers', p. 62; Beckett, Ian F. W., Bowman, Timothy and Connelly, Mark, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 10; Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, pp. 158-159; Spiers, *Haldane*, pp. 110-112; Johnson, Matthew, *Militarism and the British Left, 1902-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 134-140.

undertaken this responsibility. A limited number of units, such as the 7th Middlesex Regiment, would only allow men to enlist if they signed the ISO.²³³ Thus, this decision was extremely damaging and, based on Haldane's support for the Blue Water School of thought, nonsensical. It had destroyed the premise of Haldane's reinforcement policy and was the precursor to the chaotic, *ad hoc* procedures adopted by Lord Kitchener in 1914.

Despite this, there is a question of whether the TF needed its own reserve. Although this had not been discussed during the passage of the Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill, the TF, if used to repel raids or invasion, would need a manpower pool to cover battlefield wastage. Indeed, shortly after the TF was formed in April 1908, the War Office began to discuss the idea of a Territorial reserve the following December. Formally announced in March 1909, Haldane explained the necessity of a Territorial reserve when he presented the Army Estimates to Parliament. It was vital, he argued, for the TF to maintain contact with time expired Territorials as, in war, they could be used to bolster the TF up to a strength of 300,000 or 400,000. Although this did not require new legislation, as the power to create a 'reserve division' had been secured through the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act of 1907, the War Office was uncertain how to model it.²³⁴ Indeed, there were questions over its size, organisation and, most importantly, the liability reservists would undertake. The Quartermaster-General (QMG), Lieutenant-General Sir Herbert Miles, argued that reservists should, on mobilisation, be used to bring their former unit up to its war establishment. The CIGS, General Sir William Nicholson, advocated a more flexible approach. Each County Territorial Association would collate a register of reservists who, in war, could be posted to any unit it administered. Although breaking strict regimental ties, Nicholson's method was both flexible and inexpensive to create. Yet, after consultation with the TF Advisory Committee in 1909, the TF Reserve was to be formed of three parts. The first and primary branch, the TF Reserve, was to have an establishment of 100,000 and be composed of Territorials who had completed one engagement and four, 15 day camps. Men could enlist for anywhere between one to four years and were not required to undertake any further

²³³ *The General Annual Report on the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1913*, p. 129; Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, pp. 132-133; Spiers, *Haldane*, p. 112.

²³⁴ 1907 (Cd. 92), *Territorial and Reserve Forces. A bill to provide for the reorganisation of His Majesty's military forces, and for that purpose to authorise the establishment of county associations and the raising and maintenance of a territorial force, and for amending the acts relating to the reserve forces, 1907*, p. 7; Hansard, HC, 4th March 1909, Vol. 1, cc. 1622; Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*, pp. 17-19.

training. Reservists could, in theory, join their unit at the annual training camp, but only if units were understrength and the CO had given his permission in advance.²³⁵

The other two branches were called the Technical Reserve and Veteran Reserve (VR), later rebranded the National Reserve (NR). The former was to be composed of skilled personnel, such as electricians, railwaymen and veterinary surgeons, who were needed to perform specialist auxiliary roles on mobilisation. Despite its importance, Haldane was uncertain how to organise the Technical Reserve and, without any clear guidance, specialists were to be organised by their respective technical and professional bodies. On the other hand, the VR was to be an organisation of ex-servicemen. Men, NCOs and officers from any military branch were allowed to enlist until the age of 50, 55 and 60 respectively, and were to be organised at the discretion of each Territorial Association. The only exception to this rule was Territorials under eight years' service who, unsurprisingly, were encouraged to join the TF Reserve. There was even consideration of introducing the VR to Ireland, despite the absence of the TF. Yet, the War Office, who had debated its formation between 1910 and 1911, blocked its creation from 1912. Though this was due to mounting concerns over the security of Ireland, which had been caused by the Home Rule crisis, the VR did not have a precise military role. In practice, it was designed to maintain contact between military authorities and veterans once the latter had settled back into civilian life. Therefore, the VR was more of a social movement than a military institution, as it was clearly designed by Haldane to forge a stronger unity between army and society. Nevertheless, both branches were subsidiary to the TF Reserve, as men did not undertake military training or an obligation to serve in war. As the Under-Secretary of State for War, Lord Lucas, stated in the House of Lords in 1909, both organisations were simply to collate a register of people willing to serve in a national emergency.²³⁶

Overall, the TF Reserve and Technical Reserve were abject failures. The TF Reserve had been rushed into existence by the Army Council in April 1910, as ex-Volunteers who had transferred to the TF were coming to the end of their two year engagement. Despite hopes

²³⁵ Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*, pp. 17-19.

²³⁶ Hansard, HC, 4th August 1909, Vol. 8, cc.1865-1866 and 1897-1898; Hansard, HL, 28th July 1909, Vol. 2, cc. 802-803; *The Times*, 29th July 1909; Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*, pp. 18-20; Muenger, Elizabeth A., *The British Military Dilemma in Ireland: Occupation Politics, 1886-1914* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1991), pp. 142-163.

for them to transfer to the TF Reserve, it had attracted little interest. By September 1910, only 52 Officers and 168 other ranks had transferred across. Recruitment continued to flounder and, three years later, the TF Reserve numbered a mere 483 officers and 1,186 other ranks. In total, this amounted to less than one percent of the 113,525 other ranks who were formally discharged from the TF between October 1910 and September 1913.²³⁷ Admittedly, a significant proportion of these Territorials were simply ineligible to join, as many had not completed four successive training camps of 15 days. Although most men were able to camp for a minimum of eight days, Territorials who camped for the full 15 days in 1910, 1911 and 1912, only amounted to 63, 58 and 62 percent, respectively.²³⁸

Concurrently, the Technical Reserve struggled to obtain skilled specialists. Trades Unions were resilient to organising manpower for the TF and many had discouraged men from joining since 1908. Resistance to this strengthened after Haldane supported businesses, such as the Allied Insurance Company, who forced men entering their employment to serve as Territorials. Branded a form of economic compulsion, this provoked outrage and undermined any chance of organised labour working with Haldane to establish the Technical Reserve. The only part to succeed was the Voluntary Aid Detachments (VAD), but 47,196 of the 70,243 volunteers in 1914 were women. Despite so many volunteering to operate ambulances and work in hospitals, County Territorial Associations received no government funding for VAD units and relied on public subscriptions to support them.²³⁹

The failure of the TF Reserve is not surprising when considering the TF's recruitment difficulties. Indeed, the TF only attracted 183,000 of the 200,000 Volunteers and Yeomanry Haldane had hoped for in 1908 and, despite rising to a strength of 270,041 in 1909 after an invasion scare, it fell back to 245,779 by 1913. Whilst 67,205 new recruits entered the TF between October 1912 and September 1913, 62,978 left the force as most Territorials were reluctant to re-engage. In the district administered by the County of London Territorial Association, 10,767 men became time expired during this period; only 4,239 re-engaged, with

²³⁷ 1911 (Cd. 5482), *The General Annual Return of the Territorial Force For the Year 1910*, p.116; 1914 (Cd. 7254), *The General Annual Return of the Territorial Force For the Year 1913*, pp. 125 and 129.

²³⁸ Hansard, HC, 19th March 1913, Vol. 50, cc. 1173; Mitchinson, K. W., *England's Last Hope: The Territorial Force, 1908-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 83.

²³⁹ *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire in the Great War* (London: HMSO, 1922), p. 193; Beckett, 'The nation in arms', p. 14; Johnson, *Militarism and the British Left*, pp. 141-142; Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*, pp. 20-21.

3,294 for one year only.²⁴⁰ Due to this rapid turnover, over 80 percent of the force had served less than four years by September 1913.²⁴¹ In part, this was due to the TF becoming embroiled in the larger debate about national service in Britain. Despite royal support and the perceived threat of invasion, the image and popularity of the TF continuously struggled against criticism from the NSL and elements of the Unionist Press. Although both were in favour of conscription, they were initially hesitant about criticising the TF, as it was difficult to label the force ineffective without implying the same of Territorials who had enlisted in it. Yet, a wave of criticism was sparked by Lord Esher's article in the *National Review* in 1910, which expressed concern that the force would never reach its establishment or become militarily effective. This condemnation held significant weight, as Esher was the Chair of the County of London Territorial Association and a respected member of the CID. It reinvigorated both the NSL and Unionist Press to push for national service and, despite failing to pass any of the five bills presented to Parliament between 1908 and 1914 to achieve this, it placed the TF and its shortcomings on a public stage. Recruitment and training were continuously criticised, with the latter forcing the War Office to tackle issues such as musketry training. Despite the Liberal press championing the principle of volunteerism, as well as the Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Sir Ian Hamilton, penning a short book in defence of the TF in 1910, the image and attractiveness of the force suffered. The difficulties in recruitment reflected this and attempts to overcome this by promoting a holiday atmosphere at camps merely exacerbated the situation and renewed criticism.²⁴²

Yet, it appears the lack of enthusiasm expressed by Territorials for the TF Reserve also extended to the County Territorial Associations. Despite an official launch in April 1910, many Territorial Associations did not create or sponsor a TF Reserve branch for several years. The Fife Territorial Association did not advertise the TF Reserve until January 1911, after criticising the excessive camp regulations for reservists. In June 1912, the Cheshire Territorial Association were still debating the virtues of creating a TF Reserve. Although Colonel W. H. Bretherton, late CO 4th Cheshire Regiment, desired to form it, he was critical of the limited

²⁴⁰ Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p. 123-128.

²⁴¹ Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', p. 129.

²⁴² TNA, WO32/5451, 'Report of the Committee on Musketry Training for the Territorial Force', May 1913; Beckett, *Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 221; Beckett, 'The nation in arms', p. 4; Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, pp. 129 and 158-161; Morgan-Owen, David G., *The Fear of Invasion: Strategy, Politics and British War Planning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

training provided to reservists. The Association agreed that the regulations regarding this were wholly inadequate and, as a result, would not form a TF Reserve until this had been altered. The Essex Territorial Association had yet to discuss the formation of a TF Reserve in June 1912, whilst the East Lancashire Territorial Association had only just begun to advertise their own in October 1913.²⁴³ The Secretary of State for War, Colonel Seely, admitted as much to Parliament in March 1913, claiming that the TF Reserve was practically non-existent due to the reluctance of COs and County Territorial Associations to form it. Regardless of their reasoning, he argued, the inability to recruit the reserve was due to their inaction, as the men 'were there and anxious to serve'.²⁴⁴

Although partially to blame, Seely's condemnation of the County Territorial Associations was clearly intended to provide political cover for the War Office and Liberal administration. However, this does raise the question of why some Territorial Associations expressed limited interest in the TF Reserve. Some, such as the Cheshire Territorial Association, were clearly concerned about the efficiency of the reserve and the impact it could have on serving Territorials. Others complained about the additional administrative work caused by registration whilst, for some, recruitment difficulties for the TF absorbed the bulk of their efforts. For most, however, the lack of financial support was critical. As the *John O' Groat Journal* sarcastically commented, 'The reserve will be governed by the approved War Office principles... That is to say, it will be run distinctly on the cheap, thereby affording the Associations a further inducement for touting their respective Counties hat in hand'.²⁴⁵

Yet, it is likely that associations were reluctant to invest their time and energy into the TF Reserve after the immediate success of the VR. In January 1911, the chairman of the City of London Territorial Association, Field Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood, branded the TF Reserve a failure and questioned whether it should be replaced by the VR. The latter had already attracted 1,700 applications and, by 1912, had grown to 36 battalions.²⁴⁶ Some claimed it was too soon to pronounce the TF Reserve a failure, as it could not be condemned until the first

²⁴³ *Burnley Express*, 4th October 1913; *Crewe Guardian*, 28th June 1912; *East of Fife Record*, 19th January 1911; *Fifeshire Advertiser*, 19th November 1910; *Southend Standard and Essex Weekly Advertiser*, 6th June 1912; *Herts Army List*, 1911, p. 378 and 1912, p. 362.

²⁴⁴ Hansard, HC, 19th March 1913, Vol. 50, cc. 1089; Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*, p. 44-45.

²⁴⁵ *Barking, East Ham and Ilford Advertiser*, 7th December 1912; *Brighton Gazette*, 9th November 1910; *John O' Groat Journal*, 23rd September 1910; *The Scotsman*, 9th November 1910.

²⁴⁶ *Daily Telegraph and Courier*, 18th January 1911; Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*, p. 25.

four year engagement of Territorial service had expired in 1912. Yet, it was difficult to avoid comparing the immense popularity of the VR to the poor rates of recruitment for the TF Reserve.²⁴⁷ The Surrey Territorial Association had enrolled 1,300 men and organised them into 13 companies by June 1910, whilst the Edinburgh Territorial Association had enrolled 2,071 veterans within three weeks of opening the register in April 1911.²⁴⁸ The TF Reserve and VR, as organised by the Gloucestershire Territorial Association, were unfavourably compared by the regional press in 1911. Whilst the former was branded as non-consequential, the VR was recorded as a success, with 21 officers and 345 other ranks enlisting in Bristol alone.²⁴⁹ Overall, the strength of the force grew to 2,300 officers and 52,181 men by September 1911 and, within two years, had rapidly expanded to 5,784 officers and 209,667 other ranks.²⁵⁰ In recognition of its popularity, Lord Roberts became the VR's Colonel-in-Chief in March 1911 and the organisation was officially rebranded the NR in August 1911.²⁵¹

It is not surprising therefore that County Territorial Associations were hesitant about creating a TF Reserve. In fact, some Territorial Associations and supporters of the NR became adamant that it was far more useful and should have a practical role. Although regulations were altered in 1911 to suggest the NR could be used for home defence, it did little to satisfy supporters. The question of providing uniforms, armaments, training and a coherent organisation was continuously raised in Parliament, with MPs asking how the War Office intended to use the NR in a national emergency.²⁵²

This feeling was shared by many Territorial Associations and, in 1912, the Army Council sent the Assistant Adjutant General, Colonel F. L. Banon, to consult Territorial Associations across the UK about the role of the NR. Delivering a consistent message, Banon stated the NR was not to be a third line of defence, nor organised as cadres for mobilisation. Although it was hoped younger National Reservists would come forward and serve during a national

²⁴⁷ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 14th January 1911.

²⁴⁸ *The Scotsmen*, 8th May 1911.

²⁴⁹ *Gloucester Citizen*, 26th June 1911; *Gloucester Journal*, 1st July 1911.

²⁵⁰ *General Annual Report of the British Army for the Year ending 30th September 1911*, p. 125; *General Annual Report of the British Army for the Year ending 30th September 1913*, p. 130.

²⁵¹ Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*, pp. 24-25.

²⁵² Hansard, HC, 4th August 1909, Vol. 8, cc. 1863-1866 and 1889-1990; Hansard, HC, 16th November 1911, Vol. 31, cc. 524; Hansard, HC, 27th March 1912, Vol. 36, cc. 440-441; Hansard, HC, 30th July 1912, Vol. 41, cc. 1827-1828; Hansard, HC, 3rd December 1912, Vol. 44, cc. 2111-2112; Hansard, HL, 22nd April 1912, Vol. 11, cc. 799-803.

emergency, members would not undertake a legal obligation to serve. Most importantly, he stressed that the NR had already accomplished much. Their existence and enthusiasm had boosted recruitment for the TF and broken down the prejudice surrounding men enlisting into the army. This argument was underpinned by military and financial considerations. The War Office feared the NR rivalling the TF and TF Reserve, whilst any change to their military role would require additional expenditure to provide it with equipment, training and uniform. Yet, several Territorial Associations were left unconvinced by Banon and felt the War Office had failed to capitalise on the popularity of the NR. For instance, members of the Essex and West Riding Territorial Associations continued to advocate musketry training for the NR and considered building a rifle range for this purpose. Others, such as the Staffordshire Territorial Association, were more ardent and raised the possibility of amalgamating the TF Reserve and NR together.²⁵³

Although Seely reiterated Banon's message in Parliament, it was decided in 1913 to analyse the composition of the NR and consider its potential use for the future. To do so, County Territorial Associations were asked to classify men into three broad categories. Class I consisted of officers and men, under the age of 42, who volunteered (and were perceived fit) for general service. Though they had to undertake the same medical examination as regular reservists upon mobilisation, Class II required no medical inspection and consisted of Officers, Warrant Officers and sergeants under 55, and other ranks under 50, who volunteered for combatant or sedentary roles at home. Men assigned to Class I and II were asked to undertake an 'honorary obligation' to serve in the event of imminent national danger. On mobilisation, they would receive a gratuity of £10 and £5, which had an estimated purchasing power of £391 and £782, respectively. Under regulations, these men could be used to cover wastage, fill vacancies and undertake garrison duties in the regular army and TF. On the other hand, class III was divided into three classes, A, B, and C, with the latter representing honorary members who were unfit for active duties. Section A and B was composed of men who qualified for Class I and II but were unwilling to undertake an honorary obligation. Altogether, this analysis demonstrated that the NR was of minimal military value and unlikely to provide a strong reserve. In September 1913, the NR consisted of 215,451

²⁵³ *Army and Navy Gazette*, 28th September 1912; *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 6th December 1912; *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 19th July 1912; *Staffordshire Sentinel*, 25th July 1912; *Western Mail*, 27th November 1912.

officers, NCOs and other ranks. Class I and II numbered 9,882 and 31,829 respectively, whilst Class III totalled 43,082. Of this, Section A and B numbered 10,357 and 5,428 respectively, with Section C consisting of 27,297 men. This left serious questions over the utility of the force, as Class I and II represented a mere 4.6 percent and 14.8 percent of the NR, respectively. Admittedly, this only represented a proportion of the force, as 130,658 had yet to be classified and definitive results were not available until Territorial Associations had completed their returns. Yet, when this was completed in March 1914, the situation had not improved and the strength of Class I and II numbered around 14,000 and 46,000, respectively.²⁵⁴

Even this may be an overestimation, as National Reservists in both these classes were of questionable value. Firstly, men in both categories were under no liability to serve in war and, as a result, could not be relied upon. Secondly, it is questionable how fit and experienced National Reservists were. It was estimated that, in classes I and II, no more than a third of men had been regular soldiers. Whereas 56 percent of National reservists in Preston were classified as ex-regulars, they only made up 40 and 20 percent of the NR in Liverpool and Southport, respectively. Instead, most were ill-trained ex-Militiamen and ex-Volunteers who had not transferred to the SR and TF in 1908, respectively.²⁵⁵ Thus, it is fair to state that the NR was of little military value and was, at its heart, a social movement designed to weld military and society together. Despite the failure of the TF Reserve, it had a clear and definitive role that the NR, by its very nature and composition, could never replicate.

Military reform between 1901 and 1914 was vital for the British Army and its ability to wage industrial war. The South African War had revealed a string of critical flaws in the British Army as an administrative and military machine and forced authorities to undertake significant military reform. Throughout this process, serious questions were raised about a reinforcement policy, including the size and role of the reserve, the ability to expand the regular army, and the means of providing drafts. They became central themes of debate

²⁵⁴ *National Reserve Regulations (Provisional) 1913* (London: HMSO, 1913), p. 1-8; *The General Annual Report on the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1913*, p. 130; Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*, pp. 29-30; TNA, 'Currency Converter', <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/> [last accessed 24/02/2023].

²⁵⁵ Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*, p. 28.

within political and military circles and became key parts of Conservative and Liberal reforms between 1904 and 1908.

Though Arnold-Forster's two army scheme, based on a home and foreign service army, was designed to address these issues, he alienated key factions within the Conservative Party and could not provide solutions to the number of practical difficulties evident in his plan. Haldane, however, had far more success and created a clear two-tier military organisation that could create, expand, and sustain an expeditionary force in war. Though he ignored ongoing issues with the reserve and relegated it to form an expeditionary force, as it was economical to use part-time reservists, Haldane converted the Militia into the SR to provide the British Army with an organised reinforcement system. Despite his failure to resolve the recruitment crisis, which had deteriorated after the Militia became the SR, these reforms marked a significant advancement in administrative and military machinery.

This success was marred by Haldane's failure with the TF, however. Not only did he change the TF's role from overseas service to home defence, which left the regular army without a means to expand, but he failed to establish a viable reserve system for it. The TF Reserve and Technical Reserve were abject failures, as they failed to enlist more than 1,700 Territorials by 1914. The NR was comparatively successful, but its role was to forge Haldane's 'Nation in Arms' through a social movement that brought the military and society together. It was not designed as a second or third line and members, whose military experience widely varied, only took on 'honorary' obligations to serve in a national emergency. They were not liable to be called up and it is questionable how many had training of military worth. Despite these failings, however, Haldane should be credited for preparing the British Army for modern war, as he provided it with the mechanisms to create and sustain an expeditionary force.

Chapter Two

Chaotic Expansion: The Reinforcement System in the United Kingdom, 1914-1916

For the first time in its history, the British Army went to war with a pre-established reserve system. Initially composed of the SR and ER, these units formed the reserve system in the UK. Yet, by the Spring of 1916, this had become unrecognisable through mass recruitment and the introduction of conscription. Therefore, this chapter will trace and evaluate reinforcement policy, and how this impacted the development of the regular and Territorial reserve systems, between 1914 and 1916. Although characterised by Alison Hine as an efficient system that repeatedly improved through successive reforms, this chapter will demonstrate how its haphazard expansion made it unsuited for the demands of industrial warfare.²⁵⁶ The expansion of the reinforcement system mirrored the chaos of Lord Kitchener's manpower policies and was not designed for the long term sustainability of the British Army.²⁵⁷ Although beneficial reforms were implemented to address this imbalance, such as the adaption of sophisticated medical infrastructure, it only had a limited impact. Whilst the growing manpower crisis is cited as one of the main reasons for the difficulties experienced in supplying trained drafts, it is evident that the haphazard structure of the reinforcement system hindered the flow of soldiers overseas. Rather than an evolutionary process, as is often advocated by proponents of the learning curve, effective reform was sudden and retrospective, and only occurred after recruitment and the two subsequent Military Service Acts failed to provide the unrealistic manpower demands of the War Office.

Upon mobilisation, the SR and ER departed from their regimental depots and proceeded to their pre-designated war stations to take up its coastal defence and drafting duties.²⁵⁸ Throughout August, they, as well as regimental depots, received an estimated 136,871 and 59,065 regular and Special Reservists, whilst another 2,699 and 932 arrived in September and October, respectively. This included a number of men travelling back from the Dominions, despite the creation of units that specifically recruited British reservists, such as

²⁵⁶ Hine, Alison, *Refilling Haig's Armies: The replacement of British Infantry Casualties on the Western Front, 1916-1919* (Warwick: Helion, 2018), pp. 296-297.

²⁵⁷ Simkins, Peter, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies, 1914-1916* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 323.

²⁵⁸ TNA, WO79/40, 3rd Connaught Rangers service digest, August 1914.

Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in Canada.²⁵⁹ The Royal Berkshire Regiment recalled nearly 1,800 reservists, whilst all 1,038 men of the South Wales Borderers reported for duty. Of the latter, 851 had arrived within 48 hours of mobilisation and some other men, such as those of the Hampshire Regiment, had anticipated events and turned up before mobilisation had been ordered.²⁶⁰

Two factors, however, undermine the pre-war reserve and its role as a regimental manpower pool. As outlined in chapter one, Richard Haldane and the Liberal government had planned to use reservists and Special Reservists to cover the first six months of wastage and bring battalions at home up to establishment for service overseas.²⁶¹ However, persistent recruitment problems throughout the late Victorian and Edwardian period had undermined this, as the regular army was roughly 11,000 below its peacetime establishment in May 1914.²⁶² This was exacerbated by the Cardwell-Childers reforms, which had created a regimental system of linked battalions in 1881. Due to the need to maintain battalions serving overseas in imperial garrisons, units at home were regularly depleted and used as feeder units.²⁶³ As a result, most regiments used its reserve to complete their establishment. The 2nd Manchester Regiment required 600 men, whilst the 1st Devonshire Regiment, which had to leave 180 youths and untrained personnel behind, needed 550 reservists.²⁶⁴ Demand varied at the regimental level and for some, nearly wiped out their entire supply. Whereas the 3rd South Wales Borders had a surplus of over 400, the 3rd Norfolk Regiment sent 700 of its 800 reservists to the 1st Norfolk Regiment in Holywood, Co. Down.²⁶⁵ Combined with the 'first

²⁵⁹ 1914 (Cd. 7252), *The General Annual Report on the British Army for the Year Ending 30th September 1913*, pp. 100 and 108; TNA, WO95/5459, 3rd East Yorkshire Regiment War diary, 24th September 1914; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 41-42; Holt, Richard, *Filling the Ranks: Manpower in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), pp. 42-49; Morton, Desmond, *When your number's up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War*, (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1993), pp. 10-11.

²⁶⁰ Atkinson, C. T., *The History of the South Wales Borderers, 1914-1918* (London: The Medici Society, 1931), p. 2; Atkinson, C. T., *The Royal Hampshire Regiment, Vol. II, 1914-1918* (Glasgow: The University Press, 1952), p. 43; Petre, F. Loraine, *The Royal Berkshire Regiment, Vol. II, 1914-1918* (Reading: The Barracks, 1925), p. 116.

²⁶¹ TNA, CAB38/12/30, 'Organization and administration of the military forces in the United Kingdom', 18th June 1906.

²⁶² Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 19.

²⁶³ Bowman, Timothy and Connelly, Mark, *The Edwardian Army: Recruiting, Training, and Deploying the British Army, 1902-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 41-50.

²⁶⁴ Atkinson, C. T., *The Devonshire Regiment, 1914-1918* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton and Kent, 1926), p. 2; Wylly, H. C., *History of the Manchester Regiment, Vol. II, 1883-1922* (London: Forster Groom, 1925), p. 86.

²⁶⁵ Atkinson, *The South Wales Borderers*, p. 2; Petre, F. Loraine, *The History of the Norfolk Regiment, 1685-1918, Vol. II* (Norwich: Jarrold and Sons, 1923), p. 114.

reinforcement' who accompanied them overseas, which constituted 10 percent of its establishment, regular reservists formed up to 60 percent of the BEF.²⁶⁶

These difficulties were also experienced in the SR, which struggled to recruit from 1908. It was roughly 17,000 below establishment in September 1913 and, as Timothy Bowman and Mark Connelly have shown, recruitment had deteriorated since transitioning from the Militia. Some units, such as the 3rd Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) and 3rd Connaught Rangers, could only muster 339 and 432 other ranks in August and July 1914, respectively. Even then, figures may have been inflated from 1911 as Army Reservists, who were already under an obligation to mobilise in a national emergency, were allowed to enlist.²⁶⁷

The reduced reserve was quickly drained by unprecedented wastage rates. The quantity of reinforcements needed to supply an expeditionary force had been considered by the War Office in 1906, who estimated an annual wastage rate of 65-75 percent in *FSR, 1909, Part II*. Infantry would form the bulk of this and, overall, it projected a monthly wastage rate of seven percent. Although General Headquarters (GHQ) were responsible for requesting drafts from the War Office, it estimated that reserve units should draft 10 to 20 percent of each unit's establishment to the theatre of operations within six weeks.²⁶⁸ Yet, due to a breakdown in casualty reporting across the BEF in 1914, which will be explored in chapter four, Kitchener had dispatched the 'second' and 'third' reinforcements of 10 percent by early September, which equated to 16,865 drafts.²⁶⁹ This slow, but steady process was abandoned once the scale of casualties were known and during the first three months of war, the infantry's wastage rate had quadrupled to 28 percent, which equated to 72,072 casualties by the end of November.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ *FSR, 1909, Part II* (with 1912 amendments) (London: HMSO, 1912), p. 56; Beckett, Ian F. W., Bowman, Timothy and Connelly, Mark, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 208.

²⁶⁷ *The General Annual Report on the British Army for the Year Ending 30th September 1913*, p. 108; TNA, WO79/40, 3rd Connaught Rangers service digest, 8th July 1914; TNA, WO95/5459, 3rd Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) service digest, 4th August 1914; Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 208; Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p. 121.

²⁶⁸ *FSR 1909, Part II*, pp. 56-57.

²⁶⁹ TNA, WO159/2, Chart of drafts dispatched, August-September 1914 [ND]; WO163/44, 16th, 24th and 30th Army Council Meetings, 25th August, 3rd September and 9th September 1914.

²⁷⁰ TNA, WO159/2, 'Memorandum on wastage', 1st January 1915.

This placed an unprecedented demand upon the SR, as seen by 1,469 men drafted by the 3rd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry throughout the first three months of war.²⁷¹ Many, including the 3rd South Wales Borderers and 3rd Dorsetshire Regiment, had sent overseas all regular and Special Reservists by November, and had come to rely on recruits obtained since August to fulfil drafts.²⁷² A minority, including the 3rd Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) and 3rd Connaught Rangers, were placed under disproportionate pressure as, initially, they had to support multiple battalions on the Western Front. Though the 1st and 2nd Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) were not deployed until September, the 3rd Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) could only muster 860 reservists as reinforcements. The 3rd Connaught Rangers, who had utilised the majority of its reservists in August, sent only 570, which led to the 2nd Connaught Rangers being amalgamated with the 1st Connaught Rangers in December 1914. The former had acted as the rear guard for the 5th Brigade during the Retreat from Mons and had suffered severe casualties, with six officers and 280 other ranks missing or taken prisoner alone. Despite the periodic arrival of reinforcements, successive actions depleted the 2nd Connaught Rangers to a low of 280 other ranks by 20th October 1914.²⁷³ Although the wastage rates experienced were unprecedented, the failure to solve the long term recruitment problems had led to the reserve lasting three months, rather than the predicted six.

Despite this, the SR had been designed as a mechanism to continuously recruit, train, and draft men in war. Though the Parliamentary Militia Lobby in 1907 claimed no reputable man would enlist during war into these 'faceless institutions', initial recruitment in 1914 enabled the SR to rapidly expand.²⁷⁴ Peter Simkins' research has demonstrated how the War Office's traditional recruitment machinery was crippled by the recruitment boom of August and September 1914. Though explaining the impact this had on training centres and

²⁷¹ TNA, WO95/5495, 3rd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry war diary, August-December 1914.

²⁷² Atkinson, *The South Wales Borderers*, p. 54; Atkinson, C. T., *The Dorsetshire Regiment, Vol. II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947), pp. 117-118.

²⁷³ TNA, WO79/40, 3rd Connaught Rangers service digest, August-December 1914; TNA, WO95/1347, 2nd Connaught Rangers war diary, 20th October 1914; WO95/5459, 3rd Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) service digest, September-December 1914; Jourdain, H. F. N. and Fraser, Edward, *The Connaught Rangers: 2nd Battalion, formerly 94th Foot, Vol. II* (London: Royal United Service Institution, 1926), p. 480.

²⁷⁴ Hansard, House of Commons Debate (HC), 21st March 1907, Vol. 171, cc. 1223; Hansard, HC, 10th June 1907, Vol. 175, cc. 1147-1148.

regimental depots through overcrowding, his analysis has skirted the SR and fixed historical interpretation upon the New Armies.²⁷⁵

Though the War Office appeared to prioritise recruits for the SR, as they increased the establishment of each battalion from 557 to 2,000 on 30th August 1914, they merely rubber stamped the actions of regimental depots who, inundated with recruits, had begun transferring large numbers to the reinforcement system.²⁷⁶ Indeed, out of the estimated 150,000 enlistments in August, roughly 50,000 were sent to the SR, compared to the 78,000 for the New Armies. This flow quickly dwindled however, as only 7,882 of 68,393 men at the regimental depots in mid-September were allocated to the SR. This represented a cut of nearly 50 percent since the end of August and though the Army Council had, for the second time in three weeks, increased the establishment of the SR to 2,600, the newly created Second and Third New Armies had priority as long as reserve battalions had an estimated 2,000 recruits.²⁷⁷ Even though the War Office could not control the flow of recruits to maintain this fine balance, the SR and ER had quickly surpassed their pre-war strength of 61,425 and reached 162,786 by 26th September.²⁷⁸

Kitchener did not, however, see the SR as a mechanism to support the BEF and intended to use it as a means of military expansion. At the end of August, he ordered the CIGS, General Sir Charles Douglas, to select eight SR battalions for service overseas on the BEF's Lines of Communication. Douglas recommended Territorials, but a plea from the Inspector-General of Communications in the BEF, Major-General F. S. Robb, complicated this by requesting several SR battalions for service on the Lines of Communication in early September. On 9th September, Kitchener went a step further and planned to utilise the SR and ER as the basis for his Second New Army. Though this may have been to reinforce the BEF, which had suffered greatly since the Retreat from Mons, with professionally trained soldiers, it was an exceptional idea that could have had disrupted the entire reinforcement system. It appears however that someone within the War Office understood the magnitude

²⁷⁵ Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 59 and 66-69.

²⁷⁶ TNA, WO293/1, Army Council Instruction (ACI) 288, 30th August 1914.

²⁷⁷ TNA, WO162/4, Regimental depot returns, 29th August and 12th September 1914; TNA, WO162/20, Recruitment and SR establishment report, 31st August and 19th September 1914; TNA, WO163/44, 38th Army Council Meeting, 18th September 1914; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 68.

²⁷⁸ *The General Annual Report of the British Army for the Year Ending 30th September 1913*, p. 108; TNA, WO114/25, Regular army returns 26th September 1914.

of Kitchener's decision and quickly convinced him to abandon it. Instead, the SR and ER were ordered to recruit to a strength of 2,600 and utilise the additional manpower to create the Fourth New Army, providing their strength never fell below 1,500 all ranks.²⁷⁹

Though contentious, a reduction in size was the best choice in the short term. Despite the need to continuously recruit and train recruits, it resolved a growing number of administrative problems. For instance, the 3rd Hampshire Regiment had been deployed to the Isle of Wight and accommodated at Pankhurst Barracks. Designed to hold 700 officers and men, the strength of the battalion peaked at 2,210 during September and space for new recruits had to be found elsewhere. 400 men were stationed at the nearby criminal lunatics' ward at Pankhurst Prison, whilst the rest had to be placed under canvas until hutments were constructed.²⁸⁰ Although the level of overcrowding was not as significant as that for regimental depots and service battalions, SR brigades were congested.²⁸¹ The Army Council speculated that accommodation for 3,700 men might be needed for every SR and ER battalion, but overcrowding never reached such critical levels.²⁸²

This was exacerbated by the use of experienced officers and NCOs in the reserve to fill vacancies in the BEF and New Armies.²⁸³ The War Office ordered that former NCO's who re-enlisted must be posted to the New Armies as instructors, whilst 67 experienced soldiers were transferred to every service battalion for administrative and training duties.²⁸⁴ The 3rd Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) dispatched two groups of 67 soldiers to the 9th and 10th Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) in September and October respectively, whilst the 3rd Connaught Rangers lost nearly 50 percent of its officers in August. Four officers were drafted to the 2nd Connaught Rangers and four of its five regular officers were transferred elsewhere. Major. H. J. N. Jourdain, Captain H. J. Nolan Ferrell and Lieutenant S. H. Lewis became the nucleus of the 5th Connaught Rangers, whilst Captain L. J. Cowyn left for Irish Command. In

²⁷⁹ TNA, WO33/489, 'Interim report of the Committee on the Organisation of the SR', 14th April 1910; TNA, WO162/3, War Office letter on strength of SR, 8th October 1914; TNA, WO163/44, 17th, 29th, 30th and 34th Army Council Meeting, 26th August, 8th, 9th and 13th September 1914; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 49.

²⁸⁰ Atkinson, *The Royal Hampshire Regiment*, p. 44.

²⁸¹ Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 68.

²⁸² TNA, WO163/45, 81st Army Council Meeting, 14th November 1914.

²⁸³ TNA, WO162/2, 'Supply of Officers', 6th September 1914; TNA, WO95/25, Adjutant General war diary, 25th December 1914.

²⁸⁴ TNA, WO162/3, War Office Letters on transfer of soldiers, 21st August and 19th, 22nd and 23rd September 1914.

total, 28 officers were drafted, transferred, or lost to secondments in 1914, and while retired officers and junior subalterns replaced them, the consistent turnover and loss of experience personnel would have been felt as administrative and training responsibilities spiked.²⁸⁵ Though necessary for the expansion of the New Armies, this practice was extremely damaging to the efficiency of the SR and ER, who were liable from mobilisation to conduct training, 'at high pressure and to expend every endeavour in increasing the number of trained men available to take their place in fighting formations... abroad.'²⁸⁶

The Fourth New Army begun to form in October, but most reserve battalions lacked the strength to create full battalions without dipping below the 1,500 limit.²⁸⁷ For example, the 10th North Staffordshire Regiment and 12th Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) absorbed 810 and 417 recruits apiece, whilst 29 battalions, based on eight SR and 21 ER units, were disbanded due to the lack of available manpower. This included all Irish reserve units and was probably due to the increasingly difficult recruitment situation in Ireland.²⁸⁸ As Timothy Bowman, William Butler, and Michael Wheatley argue, recruitment in Ireland followed a similar pattern in the United Kingdom in August and September 1914, with over one-third of total Irish enlistments taking place in the first five months of war. Yet, recruitment rates varied across Ireland and though Belfast provided 62 percent of recruits in Ireland in September, the uplift in rural locations, 'whether in Ulster or the south and west, was far more muted'. By October, recruitment had slumped across the board by 70 percent and forced some reserve units, such as the 3rd Connaught Rangers, to open a recruitment centre in London.²⁸⁹

These difficulties were magnified by the disproportionate number of Irish ER battalions. In addition to the normal eight SR battalions, there were an additional 12 ER battalions, with the Royal Irish Rifles, Leinster Regiment, Royal Munster Fusiliers, and Royal

²⁸⁵ TNA, WO79/40, 3rd Connaught Rangers service digest, August 1914; TNA, WO95/5459, 3rd Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) service digest, 5th September and 3rd October 1914.

²⁸⁶ TNA, WO293/1, ACI 58, 10th August 1914; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 66-69.

²⁸⁷ TNA, WO162/4, 'Interview with Adjutant General', 28th November 1914.

²⁸⁸ TNA, WO95/5459, 3rd Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) service digest, 1st November 1914; TNA, WO95/5460, 10th (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment service digest, 31st October 1914; TNA, WO114/25, Regular army return, 7th November 1914; TNA, WO293/1, ACI 280, 25th October 1914.

²⁸⁹ TNA, WO79/40, 3rd Connaught Rangers service digest, 25th October 1914; Bowman, Timothy, Butler, William and Wheatley, Michael, *The Disparity of Sacrifice: Irish Recruitment to the British Armed Forces, 1914-1918* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp. 10-11; Jourdain, *The Connaught Rangers: 2nd Battalion, Vol. II*, p. 480.

Dublin Fusiliers each having two.²⁹⁰ This was not a practical decision, but one taken for political expediency in 1907 to forestall a backlash from the militia lobby during the Haldane reforms. As discussed in chapter one, Haldane had not intended to extend the TF or SR to Ireland and planned to retain the Irish Militia for home defence. This was used by critics to challenge the premise of Haldane's reforms and to avoid contention, he converted large parts of the Irish Militia into the SR and ER. Though this resolved the political dilemma, the combination of excessive reserve units and low recruitment left the Irish Regiments in a precarious situation.²⁹¹ Not only were service battalions prioritised for recruits, but the remainder had to be spread thinly across 20 reserve battalions. By 24th October, only the 3rd Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and 3rd Royal Irish Rifles were above 1,000 men, with reserve units at an average strength of 751 men.²⁹²

This raises the question of whether the ER should have been retained in Ireland. Though, as outlined in chapter one, it was designed for overseas service, the sudden rise of Kitchener to Secretary of State for War left the ER on the periphery of military planning. His decision to create the New Armies supplanted their overseas role and due to the rise in casualties, saw the ER as a pool of trained reinforcements. This led him to confirm their role as draft finding units in November 1914 and led to some ER units, such as the 4th and 5th Leinster Regiment, petitioning the War Office. Despite the intervention of the senior regimental officer, Colonel A. A. Weldon, and the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, John Redmond, in December 1914, the War Office refused to honour their pledge on serving as a battalion overseas.²⁹³

Although the 7th Royal Fusiliers, 4th King's (Liverpool Regiment), 4th Bedfordshire Regiment, 4th South Staffordshire Regiment and 4th North Staffordshire Regiment would serve on the Western Front from March 1915, the decision to maintain all Irish units bore little

²⁹⁰ Mitchinson, K. W., *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army 1908-1919* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 205.

²⁹¹ Hansard, HC, 28th May 1907, Vol. 174, cc. 1510-1511 and 1528; Hansard, HC, 3rd June 1907, Vol. 175, cc. 352; Hansard, HC, 10th June 1907, Vol. 175, cc. 1135-1136, 1158 and 1177; Hansard, HC, 17th June 1907, Vol. 176, cc. 182; Stoneman, Robert, 'The Reformed British Militia, c.1852-1908' (University of Kent PhD Thesis, 2014), pp. 241-242.

²⁹² TNA, WO114/25, Regular army returns, 26th September 1914.

²⁹³ TNA, WO162/3, War Office letter on role of SR and ER, 27th November 1914; Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p. 107; Whitton, F. E, *The History of the Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians): Volume II, The Great War and The disbandment of the Regiment* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1924), pp. 88 and 93.

relation to the Adjutant General's revised reinforcement structure.²⁹⁴ The day before Kitchener's decision was made to maintain all ER battalions at home, the Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Henry Sclater, reviewed the reinforcement system and surmised that a single reserve formation of 2,600 could support up to six frontline battalions.²⁹⁵ Yet, only four Irish regiments, the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Royal Irish Rifles, Royal Irish Fusiliers and Royal Dublin Fusiliers had over six active (i.e. regular and service) battalions to support. The Connaught Rangers had two reserve units for three active battalions, whilst the Leinster Regiment had four regular and service battalions with three in reserve. As the regimental historian bitterly recalled, 'there were three organizations doing work which could, with no less efficiency, with more uniformity, and considerably less expense, have been performed by one.'²⁹⁶ Only the use of all three SR and ER battalions of the Royal Irish Rifles bore any relation to Sclater's proposed structure, as they had 13 regular and service battalions. Thus, Kitchener's decision to maintain all ER battalions was questionable and, in light of the Irish experience, damaging to an efficient system.²⁹⁷ Most continued to be starved of manpower in favour of the SR and this is evident in the number of drafts dispatched overseas. The 3rd Royal Irish Rifles drafted a total of 8,069 men during the Great War, whilst the 4th and 5th Royal Irish Rifles sent 2,188 and 1,934, respectively.²⁹⁸

This problem was evident in other parts of the UK. The Bedfordshire Regiment had two reserve formations for five active battalions in August, which increased to three in November when the War Office accepted the Duke of Bedford's offer to finance a 'training centre' at Ampthill.²⁹⁹ The central difficulty, however, was the lack of reserve formations to support rapidly expanding regiments, as Sclater's review recorded at least 17 that had one reserve battalion to seven or more active battalions. This figure, though worryingly large, was conservative, as Sclater did not include the large number of 'Pals' battalions being formed by local communities and organisations across the UK. Though Sclater proposed to initially offset

²⁹⁴ Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*, p. 205.

²⁹⁵ TNA, WO162/3, War Office letter on organisation of reinforcement system, 26th November 1914.

²⁹⁶ Whitton, *Leinster Regiment, Vol. II*, p. 173.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 84, 93 and 173; James, E. A., *British Regiments, 1914-1918* (London: Samson Books, 1978), pp. 123-124.

²⁹⁸ Falls, Cyril, *The History of the First Seven Battalions, Royal Irish Rifles (Now the Royal Ulster Rifles) in the Great War* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1925) p. 186, cited in Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 13.

²⁹⁹ WO162/3, 'Ampthill Training Depot', 7th November 1914.

this deficiency by maintaining an additional 500 men for every additional battalion formed, it would interfere with the formation of Kitchener's Fourth New Army and create havoc across regimental depots and the SR. The chances of some regiments, such as the 3rd Cheshire Regiment and 3rd Northumberland Fusiliers, expanding to a proposed strength of 4,100 and 4,600 respectively was unrealistic. Despite the War Office requesting opinions on the creation of additional ER units to fit the proposed model, no further action was taken. Thus, within days of Sclater's pivotal review, it was shelved and seemingly ignored.³⁰⁰

The TF was far less suited for a protracted conflict. As discussed in chapter one, the TF had no official reinforcement structure or mechanism after the failure of the TF Reserve in 1910. Although the NR was popular, it had little military value as members, whose age and experience widely varied, had a moral and not legal obligation to mobilise. The consequences of this are evident in the extensive chaos that reigned in the Territorial reserve system until 1916. Although designed for home defence, the problem of providing reinforcements arose once the Army Council decided to accept offers of active service in August 1914. This was not mandatory and in order to become liable, men had to sign the ISO. Originally, an entire unit had to volunteer *en bloc*, but this was subsequently reduced to 80, and then 60, percent of the unit's strength. The lack of a pre-war reserve system was not necessarily dire in these circumstances, as they were initially used to relieve regular garrisons overseas. As well as individual battalions, the 42nd (East Lancashire) Division sailed for Egypt in September 1914, whilst the 43rd (Wessex), 44th (Home Counties) and 45th (2nd Wessex) Divisions left for India in October and December 1914. Nevertheless, with growing pressure from the Commander-in-Chief of the BEF, Sir John French, to use Territorials to fill the gap in France, 22 infantry battalions and seven yeomanry regiments were dispatched to the Western Front between September and December 1914.³⁰¹

Kitchener's immediate concerns was therefore twofold. Firstly, he needed to create a formation that could take over home defence duties. Though unlikely to succeed, a German invasion or raid was taken as a serious possibility and threat in 1914, as seen by the initial

³⁰⁰ TNA, WO162/3, Organisation of reinforcement system, 26th November 1914.

³⁰¹ TNA, WO70/50, 'Chronological summary of the principal changes in organisation and administration of the Territorial Force since mobilisation', pp. 1-3; TNA, WO163/44, 1st and 23rd Army Council meeting, 9th August and 1st September 1914; Beckett, Ian F. W., 'The Territorial Force', in Beckett, Ian F. W. and Simpson, Keith (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 131-132.

decision to retain the 4th and 6th Divisions at home. The second problem was the need to create a mechanism that could recruit, train and draft reinforcements to the TF overseas. To solve both problems, Kitchener decided to duplicate units which had undertaken the ISO on 15th August and applied this to all Territorial battalions on 21st September. All Territorials who had not undertaken the ISO were transferred to the newly created '1st Reserve unit', which became responsible for both home defence and draft finding duties. From November 1914, an additional '2nd reserve' was formed once the imperial service unit had departed for active service, and its role was to train and supply drafts for both formations. These designations changed in February 1915 and became known as the first, second, and third line.³⁰²

Though logical, pre-war planning and Kitchener's quick, successive decisions led to significant challenges. The immediate problem was the need to hastily create and recruit reserve units. Despite the CIGS', General Sir Charles Douglas, claim that this disjointed the TF, Territorial Associations managed to duplicate and recruit each Territorial reserve battalion with minimal disruption.³⁰³ The process was simplified by the sizable number of Territorials who had not accepted the ISO, who formed a strong nucleus at their peacetime headquarters. This saved a significant amount of time and administrative work as recruits could be organised around its pre-war cohort and, by December 1914, all bar the 6th Royal Scots had formed their second line.³⁰⁴ Table 2.1, based on TF returns from 4th December 1914, indicates that roughly 54.1 percent of Second line units were able to recruit over 80 percent of their establishment, with another 22.7 percent recruiting 60 percent or more. Most units had been formed at the beginning of September and therefore benefitted from the spike in recruitment caused by BEF's retreat from Mons.³⁰⁵

The bulk of the London Regiment had been able to harness this surge and an impressive 76.9 percent of units had recruited above 80 percent of their strength by the beginning of December. The 2/12th London Regiment (The Rangers) was authorised on 4th September 1914 and had enlisted over 1,000 men in a week, as the officer in charge of

³⁰² TNA, WO293/2, ACI 229, 24th February 1915.

³⁰³ TNA WO32/5267, Memorandum from CIGS, General Sir Charles Douglas, to Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, 4th October 1914; Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*, pp. 76-77; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 52-53.

³⁰⁴ TNA, WO114/43, TF returns, 19th December 1914; Young, Derek Rutherford, 'Voluntary Recruitment in Scotland, 1914-1916' (University of Glasgow PhD Thesis, 2001), p. 326.

³⁰⁵ Beckett, Ian F. W., 'The nation in arms', in Beckett, Ian F. W. and Simpson, Keith (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 7.

recruitment, Captain K. R. Wilson, had utilised his local links with journalists and General Practitioners to aid the process.³⁰⁶ The unique regimental identity of London Regiments also helped, and the 1/14th London Regiment (London Scottish) managed to recruit their entire reserve within one week, even though they transferred men to the 51st (Highland) Division at Bedford.³⁰⁷ The 2/15th London Regiment (Civil Service Rifles) was so successful, they had a waiting list of 500 men by the beginning of September.³⁰⁸

Table 2.1: Second line Territorial unit recruitment figures, December 1914.³⁰⁹

Recruitment for Second-Line Territorial battalions	0-20% strength: 1-205 (%)	21-40% strength: 206-410 (%)	41-60% strength: 411-616 (%)	61-80% strength: 617-820 (%)	81% or more: 821 or more (%)	Total
Scottish Command	2 (6.3)	7 (21.9)	11 (34.4)	5 (15.6)	7 (21.9)	32
Western Command	2 (4.9)	3 (7.3)	6 (14.6)	9 (22)	21 (51.2)	41
Northern Command		2 (5.7)	3 (8.6)	10 (28.6)	20 (57.1)	35
Southern Command			1 (4)	9 (36)	15 (60)	25
Eastern Command		2 (8)	6 (24)	2 (8)	15 (60)	25
London District				6 (23.1)	20 (76.9)	26
Total	3 (1.7)	14 (7.7)	25 (13.8)	41 (22.7)	98 (54.1)	181

This success occurred elsewhere and table 2.1 supports the argument that the South-West, principally the counties of Cornwall and Devon, were sympathetic and willing to enlist in the TF. Though recruitment figures were below the national average, with only seven service battalions created and units, such as the 6th Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry and 9th Devonshire Regiment, drawing recruits from Birmingham and London, the TF had quickly expanded. The 2/4th and 2/5th Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry were at full strength by November 1914, whilst three out of four second line battalions in the Devonshire Regiment

³⁰⁶ Wheeler-Holohan, A. V. and Wyatt, G. M.G. (eds), *The Rangers' Historical Records: From 1859 to the Conclusion of the Great War* (London: Antony Rowe, 1921), pp. 166-168 and 250-252.

³⁰⁷ Lindsay, J. H. (ed.), *The London Scottish in the Great War* (Eastbourne: Antony Rowe, 1926), p. 225.

³⁰⁸ *Army and Navy Gazette*, 5th September 1914.

³⁰⁹ TNA, WO114/43, TF return, 5th December 1914.

had enlisted over 80 percent of their strength by December.³¹⁰ Their experience represented a wider trend within Southern Command, which was nearly as successful as the London district. Altogether, 96 percent of their units were above 60 percent of their establishment, which included other rural counties such as Dorset and Wiltshire.

There are some anomalies, however. In Scotland, the TF and New Armies recruited 57,490 and 104,392 men respectively between August and December 1914. Derek Rutherford Young claimed the expansion and recruitment of the TF was handicapped by Kitchener's decision to push ahead with the New Armies. Until 1914, the TF had been the 'localised unit of choice' due to the old Volunteer ethos in Scotland. Though this led to buoyant recruitment across rural localities in wartime, urban recruitment was lacklustre due to the priority assigned to the regulars and New Armies. TF recruitment in Scotland was therefore limited, as it, 'was a finite body, expanded within tightly controlled parameters and limited in the number of recruits it could absorb'.³¹¹ Though perceptive about Scotland's military traditions, the argument does not match the data in table 2.1, which outlines that only 37.5 percent of second line units recruited over 60 percent of its establishment.

This occurred for two reasons. Firstly, the Yeomanry acted as competition for recruits, as the Scottish Horse had rapidly expanded to three regiments in August 1914.³¹² Secondly, there was a disproportionately high number of Territorial infantry battalions in Scotland. After the reorganisation of the auxiliary forces in 1908, Scottish Command had a total of 36 TF infantry battalions, with more than half based in rural communities. The number and distribution of battalions had been decided by cultural and social ties in rural Scotland, which were based upon the old Volunteer ethos. Indeed, Scotland's pre-war population stood at 4,760,904, whereas Western Command, which only had seven more battalions, had a combined population of 8,833,434.³¹³ Thus, Scottish Command struggled to recruit its Territorial reserve due to the disproportionate number of Territorial battalions and the

³¹⁰ Ibid, TF returns, 7th November and 5th December 1914; Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 102; White, Bonnie, 'Volunteerism and Early Recruitment Efforts in Devonshire, August 1914-December 1915', *The Historical Journal*, 52:3 (2009), pp. 659-660.

³¹¹ Young, 'Voluntary Recruitment in Scotland', pp. 328-331 and 352.

³¹² Hay, George Murray, *The Yeomanry Cavalry and Military Identities in Rural Britain, 1815-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 238.

³¹³ 1913 (Cd. 7018) *Census of England and Wales, 1911: Occupations and Industries, Part I*, p. 205; 1914 (Cd. 7254), *The Annual Return of the Territorial Force for the year 1913*, pp. 56-62.

continuation of pre-war recruiting patterns, which focused on the smaller, rural population of Scotland.

Despite its reputation as a fertile recruitment area, Northern Command also presented an unusual picture. Though 85.7 percent of units had recruited more than 60 percent of its second line establishment, the Northumberland Fusiliers failed to do so. It appears the delay in accepting the ISO, and the separation from its parent unit, undermined the ability of the second line to recruit. For instance, the 2/4th Northumberland Fusiliers were formed on paper in October but did not separate and begin recruiting until 23rd November. Despite having a strong nucleus of 23 Officers and 396 men, it only reached 694 at its peak on 31st March 1915. Whilst this could be due to the 2/4th Northumberland Fusiliers recruiting in the market town of Hexham, the Newcastle based 2/6th Northumberland Fusiliers had a similar experience.³¹⁴ Instead, it was Tyneside's highly centralised and sophisticated recruitment effort for the New Armies that had caused this, as it had absorbed most willing volunteers by the time the Territorials begun recruitment. Units such as the 20th Northumberland Fusiliers (1st Tyneside Scottish) had received extensive local and financial support from private sponsors and the Lord Mayor since September and despite the difficulty of recruiting native Scotsmen, its popularity led to the creation of the 21st, 22nd and 23rd Northumberland Fusiliers.³¹⁵

The decision to ignore the TF and expand via the New Armies has been widely debated within the historiography and has attracted criticism from Peter Dennis, who claimed the TF and County Territorial Associations were ignored due to Kitchener's unfounded prejudices against part-time soldiers. They were a skilled force designed to expand the army in war and the decision to create the New Armies had led to an unnecessary duplication of effort. This argument holds some truth, as Kitchener's decision to cap recruitment at establishment and call for the Lord-Lieutenants to use their influence, and that of the Territorial Associations, to

³¹⁴ TNA, WO95/5462, 2/4th Northumberland Fusiliers war diary, 23rd November 1914 – 31st March 1915 and 2/6th Northumberland Fusiliers, 28th December 1914 – 3rd May 1915; TNA, WO114/43, TF return, 10th October 1914; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 89.

³¹⁵ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 104-105; Stewart, Graham and Sheen, John, *Tyneside Scottish: 20th, 21st, 22nd and 23rd (Service) Battalions of the Northumberland Fusiliers* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 1999), pp. 25-38.

secure recruits for the regular army, suggests some prejudice.³¹⁶ Yet, many Territorial Associations complied and undertook various administrative and recruitment responsibilities to support the New Armies. For example, the chairman of the Staffordshire Territorial Association, Lord Dartmouth, accepted Kitchener's plea and offered to clothe, feed, house and temporarily train recruits for the regular army.³¹⁷ By December 1914, Dartmouth confirmed that the Association had helped to raise 19,668 men for the regular army and 6,691 men for the Territorials.³¹⁸ Although a drain on potential recruits for the first and second line, Territorial Associations were more concerned about Territorial competition. For instance, the Linlithgow Territorial Association were convinced that neighbouring Territorial Associations in the Scottish Lowlands were 'poaching' likely recruits.³¹⁹ Though a duplication of effort, Kitchener's decision to expand the army through pre-existing machinery helped to relieve the Territorial Associations of conducting the entirety of this burden. They were simply incapable of expanding the British Army due to the ISO, their home defence role, and the complete absence of a reinforcement system before August 1914. Any attempt by Territorial Associations to prepare home defences, train imperial service formations, expand their forces on the same scale as the New Armies and create a reserve system capable of supporting them, would have led to collapse.³²⁰

Despite this, the newly created reserve system began to falter by the end of 1914 and was partly due to its *ad hoc* nature. The immediate impact was the lack of trained reinforcements. For example, the 1/14th London Regiment (London Scottish) suffered 394 casualties at the Battle of Messines on 31st October 1914 and, by mid-November, had a strength of 280 all ranks. Despite an indent for 300 officers and men to replace losses at the beginning of November, the 2/14th London Regiment (London Scottish) were only able to draft 5 officers and 188 men, as they were the only personnel to have completed a musketry

³¹⁶ *Dundee Courier*, 10th August 1914; Dennis, Peter, *The Territorial Army 1906-1940* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society, 1987), pp. 30-33.

³¹⁷ *Cheshire Observer*, 15th August 1914; *Gloucestershire Echo*, 10th September 1914; *The Scotsman*, 11th August 1914; *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 8th August, 12th September and 14th November 1914; *West Surrey Times*, 22nd August 1914; *Western Mail*, 22nd August 1914.

³¹⁸ *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 26th December 1914; Thornton, Andrew, 'The Territorial Force in Staffordshire 1908-1915' (University of Birmingham MA Thesis, 2004), p. 71.

³¹⁹ *Linlithgowshire Gazette*, 18th December 1914; *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 3rd April 1915; *The Scotsman*, 9th December 1914.

³²⁰ Beckett, Bowman and Connolly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 99-100; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 42-46.

course. Their arrival did little to refill the ranks however, as the 1/14th London Regiment (London Scottish) suffered further casualties on 20th December when it was used to stabilise the frontline at La Bassée.³²¹

This process was complicated by the Territorial Pledge, which legally protected the integrity of each unit. Territorials enlisted to serve in their battalion only and the War Office could not transfer them against their will. This was reinforced by the ISO, which was extremely specific about the liability a Territorial undertook when he agreed to serve abroad. It stated that an officer or man will 'serve with his own unit, or with a part of his own unit, only. He cannot, under this agreement, be drafted as an individual to any other unit.' Though men could be 'temporarily' posted to another unit under these terms, it would constitute an administrative nightmare for 'A' staff trying to keep track of this.³²² Therefore, drafts for first line units could only be sent by the second or third line, as each battalion, though part of a larger regiment, constituted a distinct, and legally protected, entity. This artificially blocked reinforcements and though the 1/14th London Regiment (London Scottish) was in desperate need of manpower, the War Office could not draft any of the 1,353 Territorials available in the broader London Regiment. This disrupted the flow of reinforcements as trained soldiers were locked into hundreds of miniature reserves and artificial blocked from going overseas.³²³

Characteristic of the British Army's decentralised culture, the War Office weakly reminded COs reserve battalions of the, 'urgent necessity for ensuring that these units shall be able to provide efficient drafts for their units abroad, and... need for taking all possible measures accordingly'.³²⁴ Kitchener did, however, recognise the Territorial Pledge as the crux of the problem in December 1914 and, as a temporary solution, ordered Sclater to ask for volunteers in first line divisions who were willing to forgo their terms and transfer to a depleted battalion overseas.³²⁵ Kitchener had originally aired the idea of reinforcing the BEF by replacing depleted battalions in France with those yet to leave the UK, but this was rejected

³²¹ Lindsay, *The London Scottish*, pp. 48-50 and 225-227.

³²² TNA, WO32/5452, Note by Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Henry Sclater, regarding the Territorial pledge, 26th February 1915.

³²³ TNA, WO114/43, TF return, 21st November 1914.

³²⁴ TNA, WO293/1, ACI 216, 19th November 1914.

³²⁵ Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives (LHCMA), Hamilton 6/2, Letters from General Sir Ian Hamilton to General Sir Bruce Hamilton, Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick William Stopford and Lieutenant-General Sir Alfred Codrington, 30th November 1914.

by the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir John French. He wished to maintain experienced, albeit depleted, units, as, 'the leaven of the men who have served through the war makes itself felt' within battalions and, 'all we want is that good men should be sent out to make them up'.³²⁶

The proposed transfer never materialised however, as the Commander-in-Chief Central Force, General Sir Ian Hamilton, strongly opposed it. Pre-war defence planning had concentrated most Territorial divisions into three armies comprising Central Force, which were tasked with confronting an enemy landing in strength. Though the post of Commander-in-Chief Home Forces was not created until late 1915, Hamilton's appointment as Commander-in-Chief Central Force gave him considerable influence over the TF from August 1914.³²⁷ Therefore, when orders arrived from Kitchener, he intervened due to fears that this would lead to a new drafting system that would destroy the spirit and efficiency of Central Force. He recommended drafting untrained reinforcements or rotating battalions overseas to Kitchener and went as far as to countermand the Adjutant General's orders until he had resolved the issue.³²⁸ Hamilton was supported by his subordinates General Sir Frederick William Stopford, General Sir Bruce Hamilton, and General Sir Alfred Codrington, who were the General Officers Commanding (GOC) First, Second and Third Armies, respectively. All agreed that this would drain units of their 'keenest and best' men and damage the chance of Territorial divisions going overseas in the near future. Bruce Hamilton recommended that depleted battalions should be attached to fresh ones until the situation resolved itself, whilst Codrington was only willing to send drafts in the form of service companies.³²⁹ The latter was how the Militia reinforced the regular army during the South African War and, as explained in chapter one, was the reason Haldane replaced them with the SR.

Despite the urgency of the situation, Kitchener withdrew from his decision. Though Hamilton's protests appear to have been concerned with regimental integrity and the

³²⁶ TNA, PRO30/57/49/49, Letter from Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir John French, to Kitchener, 28th November 1914.

³²⁷ Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*, pp. 48 and 123.

³²⁸ LHCMA, Hamilton 6/2, Letters from Ian Hamilton to Bruce Hamilton, Stopford and Codrington, 30th November 1914.

³²⁹ *Ibid*, Letters from Stopford to Ian Hamilton, 1st December 1914 and Bruce Hamilton to Ian Hamilton, 1st December 1914; LHCMA, Hamilton 6/15, Letter from Codrington to Ian Hamilton, 1st December 1914.

strength of his command, he may have blocked this order to obtain a field command.³³⁰ His initial offer to become a corps commander in the BEF had been politely declined by French in early August but Hamilton saw Central Force as a means of obtaining command overseas. He continued to write to French expressing his desire to serve overseas and 'confided' in the military correspondent of *The Times*, Charles Repington, that he wanted to create and lead an army of Territorial divisions against the German Army.³³¹ These letters, combined with his correspondence to prominent individuals such as Lord Esher about his role in 'transforming' the Territorials into a force to rival the regulars, implied this was his goal. Though a temporary measure, this policy could have had an immediate effect on the drafting crisis³³²

Overall, these events support Tim Travers' argument of the structural deficiencies within the British Officer Corps, which suffered from lingering, traditional ideals from the Victorian period that enabled individual officers to hold significant, personal influence over decisions.³³³ Hamilton had enjoyed a close relationship with Kitchener from 1901, after he had been appointed his Chief of Staff during the South African War. They worked closely together throughout the war and, prior to 1914, continued to correspond. Hamilton visited Kitchener in India and Egypt in 1904 and 1912 and, from August 1914, they saw each other on a daily basis. Kitchener valued Hamilton's opinion and perceived military skill, as he suggested to the French Commander-in-Chief, General Joseph Joffre, that Hamilton should replace Sir John French as Commander-in-Chief of the BEF in November 1914. Though rejected, it demonstrates their close personal and working relationship, and reveals how Hamilton could have influenced Kitchener's decision.³³⁴

Due to this, the SR and ER had provided most of the 108,310 reinforcements sent overseas throughout 1914.³³⁵ Although criticism regarding the quality of drafts and their

³³⁰ LHCMA, Hamilton 6/15, Letter from Ian Hamilton to Bruce Hamilton, 3rd December 1914.

³³¹ LHCMA, Hamilton 6/1, Letters from Ian Hamilton to French, 18th August, 17th October and 5th November 1914; LHCMA, Hamilton 6/12, Letters from Ian Hamilton to Charles Repington, 26th October and 9th December 1914.

³³² See correspondence with French, Lord Esher and Repington; LHCMA, Hamilton 6/1, Hamilton 6/5, and Hamilton 6/12; Lee, John, *A Soldier's Life: General Sir Ian Hamilton, 1853-1947* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 132.

³³³ Travers, Tim, 'The Hidden Army: Structural Problems in the British Officer Corps, 1900-1918', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17:3 (1982), pp. 523-544.

³³⁴ Cassar, George H., 'Hamilton, Sir Ian Standish Monteith', *Oxford Dictionary of national Biography* (2004), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-33668?rskey=w8TY2U&result=2> [last accessed 26/03/2023]; Lee, *A Soldier's Life*, pp. 66-67, 87, 115 and 131.

³³⁵ Edmonds, J. E., *Military operations, France and Belgium 1914, Vol. II* (London: Macmillan, 1925), p. 467.

training began to surface in November, Haldane's reinforcement machinery had withstood a test of extreme stress. Whilst reinforcement training will be assessed later, the pause in operations between late 1914 and early 1915 had taken pressure off the regular and Territorial reserve system. Throughout this period, they were able to maintain a steady output of drafts that covered wastage and rebuilt battalions. This routine was occasionally broken up by abrupt demands and, during the Second Battle of Ypres in April and May 1915, the output of the 3rd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry's tripled from 355 to 994 reinforcements, respectively.³³⁶

These demands, as well as the Territorial experience, illustrates the volatile nature of supplying reinforcements and demonstrates the need for a streamlined system that could respond to unexpected demands. It appears the War Office recognised this, or at least the need to adapt after the events of 1914. In light of attrition and the rapid expansion of the armed forces, significant thought began to be dedicated to the long term sustainability of the BEF from January 1915. Though the government lacked a strategic manpower policy until December 1917, the first steps were taken in August 1915 when the War Policy Cabinet Committee was created to investigate the estimated size of the army and the number of volunteers needed to maintain it. The figures accepted at the sub-committee were 70 divisions and 35,000 recruits a week respectively, which had grown over time from Kitchener's original size of 30 divisions in August 1914.³³⁷

Though Kitchener had, until this point, declined to inform the government about the intended size of the army, the War Office had investigated the means to support the British Army since early 1915. Indeed, three separate memoranda between January and April 1915 examined the wastage rates of all arms during the first three, five and six months of war. Between the second and third Memoranda, a further report was produced that summarised the annual manpower needs of all formations once deployed, which would equate to a field force of 1,100,000 men. After subtracting roughly 60,000 from the total, which represented colonial, Indian and Naval personnel, it estimated that nearly 420,000 regular and 72,600 Territorial recruits were needed at all times to cover an annual wastage of 1,375,200. Though

³³⁶ TNA, WO95/5495, 3rd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry war diary, January-April 1915.

³³⁷ Beckett, 'The nation in arms', p. 12; Grieves, Keith, *The Politics of Manpower, 1914-1918* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 13-14, 19 and 22; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 40.

an overestimation, as wastage rates were lower in trench warfare, it outlined that the number of recruits under training, roughly 203,000 at the beginning of January, were insufficient to meet projected casualties. Though positive, it failed to consider how the voluntary recruitment model could enlist and train over 1,000,000 men per annum, whether this was possible over successive years and if it could be balanced against the growing demands of industry. It does, however, demonstrate a firm understanding within the War Office that the reserve system had to be altered, expanded, and numerically increased to sustain British force.³³⁸

To facilitate this, the War Office implemented numerous policies and strategies throughout 1915 and 1916. Firstly, it sought to expand its legal powers. Under section 83 of the Army Act, a regular soldier could not be transferred outside his corps after the first three months of service. This led to the introduction of the Army (Amendment) Act and Army (Amendment) Act No. 2, which swiftly passed through Parliament in March and May 1915, respectively.³³⁹ This enabled the War Office to transfer a regular soldier to any corps for the duration of the war and, when it came into force, recruits were transferred to the infantry from arms that suffered lower wastage. In total, 8,000 were transferred from the cavalry, whilst 5,000, 4,000 and 2,000 men were obtained from the Royal Field Artillery (RFA) and Royal Horse Artillery, Royal Garrison Artillery and Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC), respectively.³⁴⁰ Though positive, the War Office failed to consider how this would affect the output of reinforcements for other arms, who often required additional training and expertise. Indeed, the Army Council was quickly forced to transfer 50 men per week back from the infantry to the RFA to make up projected shortfalls.³⁴¹

This gave the Adjutant General free reign over manpower and, in effect, made all personnel 'general service', though there were no official system governing transfers until the introduction of the TR in September 1916. If a reserve unit could not provide the

³³⁸ TNA, WO159/3, First, Second and Third Memoranda on Wastage, 1st and 14th January and 16th April 1915, and 'Requirements of British Forces serving overseas' [ND] c. January 1915.

³³⁹ Hansard, HC, 2nd March 1915, Vol. 70, cc. 759-767; Hansard, House of Lords Debate (HL), 10th March 1915, Vol. 18, cc. 654-657; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 62-63.

³⁴⁰ TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office; TNA, WO293/2, ACI 199, 200, 225, 23rd and 24th May 1915.

³⁴¹ TNA, WO293/2, ACI 73, 8th June 1915; Brown, Ian Malcolm, *British Logistics on the Western Front, 1914-1919* (London: Praeger Publishers, 1993), pp. 87 and 127.

reinforcements demanded, then units within the district, and then Home Command, were called upon to fulfil it.³⁴² The number of transfers in 1915 were limited, with most drafts coming from the regimental reserves. For example, the 3rd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry drafted 3,095 soldiers to their own regiment, compared to the one transfer of 400 men it sent to the Lancashire Fusiliers.³⁴³

This raises questions over regimental integrity. Though this will be assessed in greater detail later on, these powers were not always used as a last resort and, at times, disregarded regimental sensibilities. For instance, the 3rd Norfolk Regiment were ordered to transfer 300 soldiers to the 1st Essex Regiment at Gallipoli in June 1915, in addition to the 200 men sent by the 3rd Essex Regiment. This was followed by another 150 from the 3rd Norfolk Regiment in September, after all but 18 of the original draft drowned when their transport ship, the *Royal Edward*, sank on route to Mudros.³⁴⁴ There is little reasoning to suggest why the 3rd Norfolk Regiment was ordered to fulfil the bulk of this draft. The 3rd Essex Regiment had 542 trained soldiers, in addition to 1,263 recruits, whilst the 3rd Norfolk Regiment was in a similar position with 559 trained soldiers and 1,209 recruits.³⁴⁵ There was also no difference in terms of liability, as the Norfolk and Essex Regiments had the same number of units serving abroad, with three battalions in France and a fourth in Mesopotamia and the Dardanelles, respectively. Considering that no large-scale operations were conducted on the Western Front until September 1915, there is no evident reason to indicate why the Essex Regiment could not have fulfilled the draft in full. Although uncommon, this supports Ian Beckett's argument that the process of transfers could be arbitrary.³⁴⁶

This example raises an interesting question over the destination of drafts. The quantity of manpower and support given to the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF) throughout 1915 has been debated within the historiography. As part of the Easterner versus Westerner debate, historians have considered whether these factors detrimentally affected the Gallipoli Campaign, with many contemporaries, including the Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Ian

³⁴² TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office.

³⁴³ TNA, WO95/5495, 3rd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry war diary, January-December 1915.

³⁴⁴ Burrows, John W., *Essex Units in the War 1914-1919: The Essex Militia, Vol. 4* (Southend-on-Sea: John H. Burrows and Sons, 1929), p. 181; Petre, *The Norfolk Regiment*, p. 300.

³⁴⁵ TNA, WO114/57, Regular army return, 28th June 1915.

³⁴⁶ Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', p. 137.

Hamilton, citing manpower as a key reason for its failure.³⁴⁷ Nevertheless, there appears little evidence to support this claim. No formal allotment was ever given to an expeditionary force and the number of drafts sent was determined by competing factors, such as the strength of each force and the priority of each theatre.³⁴⁸ Though the Western Front had priority from the Somme Campaign, with the 3rd Norfolk Regiment only drafting 300 and 40 men to Egypt in 1917 and 1918 respectively, the Dardanelles and other theatres received a fair share of manpower beforehand. For example, the 3rd East Yorkshire Regiment drafted 3,371 men throughout 1915 to five active battalions. One battalion, the 6th East Yorkshire Regiment, was part of the MEF and received 721 men between July and November 1915, which equates to 21.4 percent of the yearly drafting total. The 3rd Norfolk Regiment sent 1,005 out of 3,467 reinforcements to Mesopotamia and the MEF in 1915, which equated to 29 percent of all drafts.³⁴⁹ They were plagued by transportation issues; It was common for drafts to wait several weeks until sufficient shipping was available and they had to be shipped from England to Egypt, and then to British bases at Lemnos or Mudros.³⁵⁰ This delay, combined with the exceedingly high sickness rate that plagued Gallipoli and other eastern theatres, left battalions depleted. John Crawford and Matthew Buck estimate that the NZEF suffered a weekly sickness rate of nine to 10 percent in September 1915, whilst the BEF only evacuated 0.5 percent of soldiers from the frontline due to illness.³⁵¹ As a result, reinforcements could never match wastage and gave the inaccurate impression that the MEF was starved of manpower.³⁵²

Compared to the relative ease of adjusting the Army Act, Kitchener faced a political backlash over his proposed changes to the Territorial Pledge. Through the TF Bill, which was

³⁴⁷ Atkinson, *The Royal Hampshire Regiment*, p. 83; Spiers, Edward M., 'Gallipoli', in Bond, Brian (ed.), *The First World War and British Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 168; Travers, Tim, 'The Army and the Challenge of War 1914-1918', in Chandler, David. G and Beckett, Ian F. W. (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 219-220.

³⁴⁸ TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office.

³⁴⁹ TNA, WO95/5459, 3rd East Yorkshire Regiment War diary, January-December 1915; Petre, *The Norfolk Regiment*, p. 116.

³⁵⁰ Imperial War Museum (IWM), 13802, Reports by Inspector-General of the Infantry, Major-General E. A. A. Egerton, on East Anglian Reserve Brigade, 18th-19th September 1916 and 1st Thames and Medway SR Brigade, 6th October 1916.

³⁵¹ Crawford, John and Buck, Matthew, *Phenomenal and Wicked: Attrition and Reinforcement in New Zealand Expeditionary Force at Gallipoli* (New Zealand Defence Force, 2020), <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/ebook.html> [last accessed 16/09/2022], p. 83.

³⁵² Atkinson, *The Royal Hampshire Regiment*, pp. 83, 104-106 and 174; Atkinson, *The South Wales Borderers*, pp. 178.

introduced to Parliament in April 1915, Kitchener attempted to remove all artificial barriers to drafting by making Territorials liable for service in any regiment or corps. Though placing them on an equal footing with their regular counterparts, he faced resistance in military and political circles. Despite the bill's necessity, which would enable the Army Council, 'to liquefy its assets and to make such transfers as will secure the best distribution in the field', the Director-General of the TF, Lieutenant-General Edward Bethune, resisted. He warned Kitchener about its unpopularity, the negative impact this would have on the 'character' of each unit and, more broadly, the erosion of trust it would cause.³⁵³ This outcry was mirrored in Parliament when the bill came to its second reading on 27th April 1915, with many politicians accusing Kitchener of forcing men to transfer from home to imperial service. Many MPs were uncertain as to why this was necessary after so many Territorials had opted for imperial service and the Under-Secretary of State for War, Harold Tennant, struggled to respond, claiming it was not as a pressing issue but something that may be needed in the future.³⁵⁴ After fierce resistance, the bill was withdrawn by the Attorney General, Sir John Simon, who argued that the Territorial Pledge must be upheld at all costs. If the drafting situation became dire, he recommended a call for volunteers, which had already been attempted and dismissed by War Office four months previously. It demonstrates the serious disconnect between the War Office and Cabinet and, more broadly, the dysfunctional nature of British civil-military relations under Kitchener's tenure.³⁵⁵

Despite Kitchener's hopes, the Territorial Pledge was not removed until the Military Service Acts of 1916. Until then, the Territorial reserve system lacked flexibility and its effectiveness became entirely dependent upon the role and area of deployment of each unit. Whilst reserve units, such as the 2/14th London Regiment (London Scottish), struggled to sustain the first line overseas, others remained undisturbed. For example, the 3/5th Royal West Kent Regiment sent no drafts to the 1/5th Royal West Kent Regiment between July 1915 and April 1916, as the latter required little manpower once it undertook its garrison duties across India in 1914.³⁵⁶

³⁵³ TNA, WO32/5452, 'Territorial Force Bill', April 1915.

³⁵⁴ Hansard, HC, 27th April 1915, Vol. 71, cc. 611-623.

³⁵⁵ TNA, WO32/5452, Letters between John Simon and Kitchener, 29th April 1915.

³⁵⁶ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on Territorial 3rd Line, 11th-12th May 1916; Atkinson, C. T., *The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment, 1914-1919* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton and Kent, 1924), pp. 68-69 and 139-145.

The difficulties of the Territorial Pledge were exacerbated by the conflicting roles of home defence and draft finding allocated to the second line. Until March 1915, men could still enlist for home service in the TF and, from April, all men unable or unwilling to sign the ISO were transferred to provisional battalions, which were created for home defence.³⁵⁷ Though beneficial for creating and recruiting the reserve, home service personnel capped the number of ISO recruits in second line formations, which compromised its ability to execute its drafting responsibilities. Table 2.2, based upon a 10 percent sample of battalions across Home Commands and the London District, calculates the average number of soldiers who were liable for home or imperial service between December 1914 and April 1915. These dates were selected as most second line formations had been formed by December and the decision to transfer all home service personnel was made in April.

Table 2.2: Proportion of imperial and home service other ranks in each Home Command, December 1914 to April 1915.³⁵⁸

	Imperial Service other ranks	Home Service other ranks:
Scottish Command	50.1%	49.9%
Western Command	67.6%	32.4%
Northern Command	66.3%	33.7%
Southern Command	66.6%	33.4%
Eastern Command	22.1%	77.9%
London District	91.6%	8.4%
Average:	60.3%	39.7%

On average, only 60.3 percent of soldiers during this period were available for imperial service, which capped the capacity of the Territorial reinforcement system and limited the output of trained reinforcements by nearly 40 percent.³⁵⁹ Though this supports Ian Beckett's argument that home service remained popular, the distribution of imperial and home service recruits followed regional patterns.³⁶⁰ Northern, Southern and Western Command followed

³⁵⁷ TNA, WO70/50, Summary of organisational changes in the TF, p. 12.

³⁵⁸ TNA, WO114/43, TF return, 4th December 1914; TNA, WO114/44, TF returns, 1st January, 30th January, 1st March, 29th March and 26th April 1915.

³⁵⁹ Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', p. 135.

³⁶⁰ Unless specified, all examples of battalions were drawn from dataset and sources noted in table 2.2.

an almost identical pattern, with roughly 66 to 67 percent of men signing the ISO. This largely followed a rural and urban divide, with the latter enlisting overwhelmingly for overseas service. An average of 89.8 percent of men in the 2/7th Manchester Regiment had accepted the ISO, whilst the 2/4th Royal Lancaster Regiment, based in the Lancastrian market town of Ulverston, had a minority of only 13.9 percent. Regiments 'orphaned' by the Haldane reforms also raised a higher proportion of ISO soldiers.³⁶¹ The 2/3rd Monmouthshire Regiment, which was based in the Welsh market town of Abergavenny, had an average of 62.3 percent men available for overseas service. It had a strong local identity that derived from the Rifle Volunteer movement of 1859 and had little competition for recruits from nearby New Army battalions.³⁶²

The rural and urban division also explains the recruitment pattern in Scottish Command and the London District. The latter, based upon the densely populated metropolis, was primarily composed of ISO recruits, who formed an impressive 91.6 percent of all soldiers. In the former, the split of imperial and home service personnel at 50.1 and 49.9 percent respectively reflects the almost equal distribution of Territorial battalions in rural and urban communities.³⁶³ The division also reflects pre-war recruitment patterns of urban enlistment, which was stimulated by economic uncertainty caused by war. Rural communities, however, were often unwilling to abandon their domestic trade and therefore saw home defence as their contribution to the war effort.³⁶⁴ There was also an increase in ISO recruits once the first line had deployed on active service. For instance, the Dundee based 2/4th Black Watch (Royal Highlanders) recorded a significant boost in soldiers undertaking the ISO once news broke that the 1/4th Black Watch (Royal Highlanders) had been selected for overseas service on 11th December 1914. The number increased from 562 (60.2 percent) at the beginning of January 1915 to 829 (84 percent) by the end of the month.³⁶⁵

Proportionately, Eastern Command had a higher percentage of home service soldiers due to the growing fear of invasion across the East and South of England in 1914. Invasion

³⁶¹ Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, p. 110.

³⁶² Brett, Albert George, *A History of the 2nd Battalion, The Monmouthshire Regiment* (Pontypool: Hughes and son, the Griffin Press, 1933), pp. 1-20 and 111-114.

³⁶³ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 107.

³⁶⁴ Beckett, 'The nation in arms', pp. 7-10; Pennell, Catriona, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 149-152.

³⁶⁵ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 11th December 1914.

anxiety had been an intermittent fear in Britain throughout the 19th century, as seen by the invasion scares of 1803-1805 and the 1850s.³⁶⁶ The outbreak of war had led to renewed concerns and a boom in invasion and spy literature, which had been prevalent since the *Battle of Dorking* was published in 1870. There was an increase in public demand for pre-war periodicals, plays and films, such as *The Kaiser's Spies* and *An Englishman's Home*, whilst newer cinematic pieces, such as *The Raid of 1915*, gained popularity. Some prominent authors, such as William Le Queux, capitalised upon this and published a series of new novels within the first few months of war. Unlike other novelists, however, he strongly believed there was a hidden network of German spies within the UK, with a large concentration in the East and South-East of England. To expose this 'mortal danger', he shifted his prose from 'fiction' to 'non-fiction' and published *German Spies in England: An Exposure* in February 1915. Though it held little truth, as it had been based upon rampant rumours and pre-existing prejudices, the pamphlet was a commercial success that sold over 40,000 copies in the first week.³⁶⁷

These fears were reproduced for a much larger audience through the press. In October 1914, the *Daily Mail* republished the infamous 'Preparations for Invasion' pamphlet from 1803, whilst *The Observer* emphasised that an invasion of the UK was logical after Germany's failure on the continent. The military correspondent for *The Times*, Charles Repington, claimed that the chances of German invasion were now high, whilst the government's actions intensified fears. For instance, Kitchener had deployed 300,000 New Army and Territorial troops along the southern and eastern coasts in preparation for a feared invasion in November 1914, whilst the Home Secretary, Reginald McKenna, revealed the formation of emergency planning committees in every district. Though an invasion never materialised, the public perception of national vulnerability rose as Zeppelin air raids began and the German Imperial Navy bombarded Great Yarmouth, Hartlepool, Scarborough, and Whitby in November.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁶ Morgan-Owen, David G., *The Fear of Invasion: Strategy, Politics and British War Planning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

³⁶⁷ Le Queux, William, *German Spies in England: An Exposure* (Toronto: Thomas Langton, 1915), p. 92; Holman, Brett, 'William Le Queux, The Zeppelin Menace and the invisible Hand', *Critical Survey*, 32:1-2 (2020), pp. 99-114; Laurie-Fletcher, Danny, *British Invasion and Spy Literature, 1871-1918* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 97-104.

³⁶⁸ *Daily Mail*, 26th October 1914; Mitchinson, *Defining Albion*, pp. 80-81 and 87-88.

It is therefore logical that home service recruitment flourished within some communities. For instance, local and regional newspapers across Sussex consistently debated the prospect of invasion and considered numerous themes, including the need to prepare, the presence of spies, the role of citizens in armed resistance and the formation of emergency committees.³⁶⁹ The tempo of discussion rose towards the end of 1914 and, after the brief bombardment of Great Yarmouth, the *Bexhill-on-Sea Observer* reminded readers that one coastal resort no longer laughed about the prospect of invasion.³⁷⁰ This rhetoric, combined with the reports of real and imagined German atrocities in Belgium throughout 1914, led to recruitment literature that emphasised the Territorials' role of home defence.³⁷¹ In trying to recruit the 2/4th Royal Sussex Regiment, a Territorial sergeant stated that men could go overseas but, 'in joining the Territorial Force they were joining entirely to defend the homeland. Let there be no mistake about that: They would only be called upon for home defence'. A similar message was repeated by the Lord Lieutenant of the Sussex Territorial Association, the Duke of Norfolk, who desired, 'men for home service so as to free the [1/4th] Battalion [Sussex Regiment] at Newhaven for foreign service.'³⁷² Despite an urgent appeal for imperial service recruits in January 1915, only 6.8 percent of men in the 2/4th Royal Sussex Regiment had undertaken the ISO by April.³⁷³ This effectively transformed parts of the Territorial reserve system into home defence formations that were incapable of producing reinforcements. Though K. W. Mitchinson could provide no reason as to why the 1/5th Royal Sussex Regiment received no drafts between February and May 1915, its reserve unit was a *de facto* home service battalion as only 151 recruits, or 19.7 percent of all soldiers, had undertaken the ISO by March.³⁷⁴

³⁶⁹ *Eastbourne Gazette*, 4th November 1914; *Hastings and St. Leonards Observer*, 24th October 1914; *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 6th November and 4th December 1914; *West Sussex County Times*, 29th August 1914; *West Sussex Gazette*, 5th November 1914.

³⁷⁰ *Bexhill-on-Sea Observer*, 7th November 1914.

³⁷¹ Green, Leanne, 'Advertising War: Picturing Belgium in First World War publicity', *Media, War and Conflict*, 7:3 (2014), pp. 313-314; Gregory, Adrian, 'A Clash of Cultures: The British Press and the Opening of the Great War', in Paddock, Troy R. E (ed.), *A Call to Arms: Propaganda, Public Opinion and Newspapers in the Great War* (London: Praeger, 2004), pp. 26-30; Horne, John and Kramer, Alan, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (London: Yale University Press, 2001).

³⁷² *Mid Sussex Times*, 1st September 1914 and 5th January 1915; *West Sussex Gazette*, 12th November 1914.

³⁷³ *Mid Sussex Times*, 5th January 1915.

³⁷⁴ TNA, WO114/44, TF return, 1st March 1915; Mitchinson, K. W., *The Territorial Force at War, 1914-1916* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 182.

This, as well as the Territorial Pledge, combined to create a number of miniature reserves that could only recruit, train and draft a handful of ISO soldiers at once. It locked the Territorial reserve into a cycle of perpetual drafting crises that led to a partial collapse, as it could not respond to sudden demands. This reached its critical proportions in May 1915, as the 1/5th London Regiment (London Rifle Brigade), 1/12th London Regiment (The Rangers) and 1/13th London Regiment (Kensington) were withdrawn to the Lines of Communication in France, whilst the 1/7th and 1/9th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were organised into half battalions. The 1/1st, 1/2nd and 1/3rd Monmouthshire Regiment had to be amalgamated into a single battalion and the 1/5th Royal Scots was withdrawn from Gallipoli in October after its reserve battalions, 'could not produce the drafts it needed'.³⁷⁵

Despite these structural issues, many commanders within the BEF became suspicious of the second line and accused them of purposefully withholding drafts to maintain their regimental integrity. The GOC 47th (1/2nd London) Division, Major-General Charles St. L. Barter, claimed COs at home used their prerogative to retain their best soldiers. They allegedly sent the 'dregs' overseas and the GOC I Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Monro, was convinced that senior military control was needed to force second line units to undertake their draft finding responsibilities.³⁷⁶ Though a common claim within the British army, there is evidence that second line battalions saw themselves as distinct units with their own identities. There is no proof that they withheld manpower and though criticism quickly petered out, it demonstrates the frustration felt overseas regarding the lack of Territorial reinforcements.³⁷⁷

The problem of home defence was rectified in May 1915 when home service recruits, numbering 82,588 in August, were withdrawn to create 68 provisional battalions.³⁷⁸ Though restoring a significant part of the second line's capacity to recruit, train and draft

³⁷⁵ Atkinson, *The Royal Hampshire Regiment*, p. 109; Edmonds, J.E., *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1915*, Vol. I (London: Macmillan, 1927), p. 340.

³⁷⁶ Mitchinson, *The Territorial Force at War*, pp. 180-181.

³⁷⁷ Ibid, pp. 180-181; Hampshire Record Office (HRO), The Royal Green Jackets Regimental Archive (TRGJRA), 170A12W/D/1043, Diary of Rifleman Herbert Stuart Hards, 2/6th London Regiment (City of London Rifles), 26th June 1915; Atkinson, *The South Wales Borderers*, p. 181; Godfrey, E. G., *The "Cast Iron Sixth": A History of the Sixth Battalion London Regiment (The City of London Rifles)* (London: F. S. Stapleton, 1938), pp. 32-33; Lindsay, *The London Scottish*, pp. 280-281; Wheeler-Holohan and Wyatt, *The Rangers*, pp. 177-179.

³⁷⁸ TNA, WO95/5459, 2/8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders war diary, 23rd May 1915; Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', p. 135.

reinforcements, their position was complicated by the third line. It is not clear why Kitchener created the third line in November 1914, but they were probably intended to create an additional body of manpower to be drawn upon, as second line formations could not increase their establishment due to their active role in home defence.³⁷⁹ The idea that the third line would undertake all drafting responsibilities began to crystallise in January 1915 and despite some confusion over this in February, it was announced in March.³⁸⁰ Though establishing a clear precedent and avoiding duplication of effort by centralising training, equipment, and instructors into one body, the third line never became an efficient organisation. Ignoring the evident issues around the Territorial Pledge, this was the second time since August 1914 that the War Office had attempted to create and recruit a new Territorial reserve. Third line depots received few officers and NCOs as a nucleus and, due to the lack of accommodation, were unable to form until the first line had departed overseas. For instance, the 3/4th Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own (Yorkshire Regiment), as well as the 3/6th and 3/9th Durham Light Infantry, only formed between March and May 1915, once the 50th (Northumberland) Division had departed for the Western Front.³⁸¹ Their expansion was slowed further by dwindling recruitment, which had fallen from 462,901 in September 1914 to 87,896 in February 1915.³⁸² The 3/12th London Regiment (The Rangers), who were fortunate enough to be authorised in January 1915, took over three months to enlist 400 men.³⁸³

Even with these delays, the strength of the third line was capped at 619 all ranks. Despite authority for some to recruit 50 percent over their establishment, they were too small to accommodate anything more than routine wastage. Severe casualties would deplete their strength and it took time to recruit their replacements and place them through the 12, and later 14, week training syllabus. By the time this was complete, units would have sustained further casualties and made additional demands, which would have depleted units and restarted the process. The War Office ignored these criticisms and only increased the third line's establishment to 819 and 1,319 all ranks in November 1915, depending on whether the

³⁷⁹ TNA, WO162/3, Organisation of reinforcement system, 29th December 1914.

³⁸⁰ TNA, WO293/2, ACI 240, 25th February 1915 and ACI 72 and 243, 6th and 26th March 1915.

³⁸¹ TNA, WO32/5268, 'Northumberland Division' [ND] c. May-June 1915; TNA, WO95/5462, 2/6th Durham Light Infantry war diary, 7th May 1915, 2/9th Durham Light Infantry war diary, 25th March 1915, 2/4th Yorkshire Regiment war diary, 28th April 1915.

³⁸² *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War* (London: HSMO, 1922), p. 378; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 104-133.

³⁸³ Wheeler-Holohan and Wyatt, *The Rangers*, pp. 252 and 258.

battalion was supplying one or two units on active service.³⁸⁴ Though beneficial, the third line was too weak to support the first line overseas. This forced the War Office to continue using the second line which, according to Kitchener, had been 'bled white' by May 1915. Though he promised the Commander-in-Chief Central Force, General Sir Leslie Rundle, that no more men would be taken, the position was untenable.³⁸⁵ Attempts were made to limit the number of trained personnel that could be drafted from second line battalions, with caps of 700, 600, and lastly an all-time low of 400, being implemented in June, July, and November 1915, respectively.³⁸⁶ The War Office were prepared to go even further if reinforcements were needed, however. The 2/4th Royal Welsh Fusiliers had dropped to a meagre strength of 299 all ranks by November 1915, whilst the 2/4th Suffolk Regiment and 2/4th Essex Regiment were disbanded and ordered to transfer all recruits to the third line.³⁸⁷

This raises serious questions about the role of the second line. Though events demonstrate its importance in maintaining the flow of reinforcements overseas, the caps imposed suggest an unwillingness by military authorities to commit to such a policy. Though Kitchener may have been influenced by the second line's home defence role, its importance appeared to be ebbing when he dismissed the concerns of the Director-General of Home Defence, Lieutenant-General Sir Lancelot Kiggell, in October 1915. Kitchener deemed the prospect of invasion unlikely and outlined how the BEF was in desperate need of manpower after the 59,247 casualties it had sustained at the Battle of Loos. He was clearly concerned about this, as he amalgamated a series of second and third line battalions in the 64th (2nd Highland), 65th (2nd Lowland) and 68th (2nd Welsh) Divisions to generate additional reinforcements.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁴ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on number of recruits with over three months training, 15th May 1916; TNA, PRO30/57/59/75 and 79, Letter from Lord Esher to Lieutenant-Colonel B. J. H. Fitzgerald, 25th and 27th September 1915; TNA, WO293/2, ACI 213, 25th March 1915; TNA, WO293/3, ACI 51, 5th November 1915.

³⁸⁵ Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*, pp. 99-100.

³⁸⁶ TNA, WO95/5464, 69th Division AQMG war diary, 30th November 1915; TNA, WO293/2, ACI 159, 16th June 1915 and ACI 228, 22nd June 1915; TNA, WO293/3, ACI 225, 26th July 1915.

³⁸⁷ TNA, WO95/5464, 2/4th Royal Welsh Fusiliers war diary, September-October 1915 and 69th Division AQMG war diary, 30th November 1915; Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', pp. 136-137; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 68; Mitchinson, *The Territorials Force at War*, p. 182.

³⁸⁸ TNA, WO32/5268, Note from Director-General of Home Defence, Lieutenant-General Sir Lancelot Kiggell, to CIGS, General Sir Archibald Murray, 27th September 1915 and note by Kitchener, 7th October 1915; Edmonds, J.E., *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1915, Vol. II* (London: Macmillan, 1928), pp. 392-393.

Instead, Kitchener planned to use the second line as a means of military expansion and approached the CIGS, Lieutenant-General Sir James Wolfe Murray, about using it as an economical 'super-structure' to form another 'New Army' in June 1915.³⁸⁹ Though these plans were unfeasible in light of dwindling recruitment, it placed battalions in stasis and trapped a proportion of manpower within them, as they were too weak to serve overseas but unable to draft if they fell below the threshold of 400. For instance, Rifleman Herbert Herds enlisted into the 2/6th London Regiment (Rifles) in September 1914 and though passing all his musketry evaluations by March 1915, he remained in the UK until at least December 1915. Despite the perpetual drafting crises and desperate need for men, Herds surmised his experience as, 'more or less pleasant, several changes of locality, many kindnesses at the hands of strangers, plenty of leave, quick promotion'.³⁹⁰ As a result, the second line struggled on without clear direction and only a handful of formations, including the 60th (2nd London) Division and 61st (South Midland) Division, had proceeded overseas by December 1916. This system was neither efficient nor sustainable and demonstrates Kitchener's failure to control the expansion of the British Army.³⁹¹ As the President of the Northumberland Territorial Association informed the future CIGS, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Wilson, in August 1915, Kitchener's policies were a, 'great show up... as regards the continual sending out of fresh formations instead of replenishing the existing formations at the seat of war. The A.G.'s [Adjutant General's] department are at their wits ends – they cannot replace casualties at this rate'.³⁹²

The chaos this caused was replicated in the regular reinforcement system. Rather than modify the SR and ER to match the expansion of the armed forces, Kitchener created the Second and Local Reserve in April and July 1915 to support his New Armies. The former was created from the Fourth New Army and absorbed 75 battalions into the reserve system. It repurposed 50,722 soldiers as reinforcements and was created to supply reinforcements to the First, Second and Third New Armies. The Local Reserve was formed of 68 battalions and

³⁸⁹ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on second line Territorial divisions, 1916-1917; TNA, WO159/4, Memorandum from CIGS, Lieutenant-General James Wolfe Murray to Kitchener, 15th June 1915; Mitchinson, *Defending Albion*, p. 99.

³⁹⁰ HRO, TRGJRA, 170A12W/D/1043, Rifleman Hards' diary, 6th and 15th March 1915 and 'yearly summary'.

³⁹¹ TNA, WO159/4, Memorandum from Wolfe Murray to Kitchener, 15th June 1915.

³⁹² HRO, TRGJRA, 170A12W/D/1125a, Letters from Duke of Northumberland to Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Wilson, 19th and 25th August 1915.

was created from the 'depot' companies affiliated to each 'Pals' Battalion. Originally created under Kitchener's orders in December 1914, companies from the same regiment were merged into battalions to provide reinforcements to the newly dubbed Fourth and Fifth New Armies.³⁹³

Though Hine asserts that the Second and Local Reserve relieved pressure on the SR and ER, it created a convoluted and inefficient reinforcement system.³⁹⁴ As mentioned, the reinforcement system had not been crafted to support individual regiments and opportunities to remodel the SR and ER were ignored in 1914. The decision to repurpose the Fourth New Army, however, had offered the War Office an opportunity to rebalance it. Yet, the 143 battalions of the Second and Local Reserve were added without reference to regimental requirements, which led to the number of reserve battalions rising from 101 to 244. For example, the 3rd and 4th North Staffordshire Regiment was now two of four reserve battalions supporting five active battalions, even though Sclater's scheme had only ever demanded one. Equally, regiments that had rapidly expanded and needed additional reserve units, such as the Middlesex Regiment, now had too many. The 5th and 6th Middlesex Regiment, which needed an extra battalion to help support its 16 active battalions, had gained six.³⁹⁵

Though Kitchener may have seen this approach as a way to boost sluggish recruitment figures across the UK, as enlistment for service and 'Pals' battalions held more appeal than joining a generic reserve unit, the short term boost to recruitment could not offset the administrative chaos created.³⁹⁶ Whilst the impact this had on training will be discussed later, including the dilution of instructors, equipment and training facilities, it's important to note that reserve units needed to be maintained at full strength to ensure all war material and instructors were used efficiently. Yet, with recruitment rates continuing to plummet throughout 1915, the reinforcement system began to dwindle in size and, in parts, became an empty shell.³⁹⁷ The Second Reserve was the worst affected as, under War Office orders, it

³⁹³ WO293/1, ACI 13, 2nd December 1914; TNA, WO293/2, ACI 96, 10th April 1915 and ACI 30, 4th June 1915; TNA, WO293/3, ACI 109 and 205, 4th and 13th July 1915.

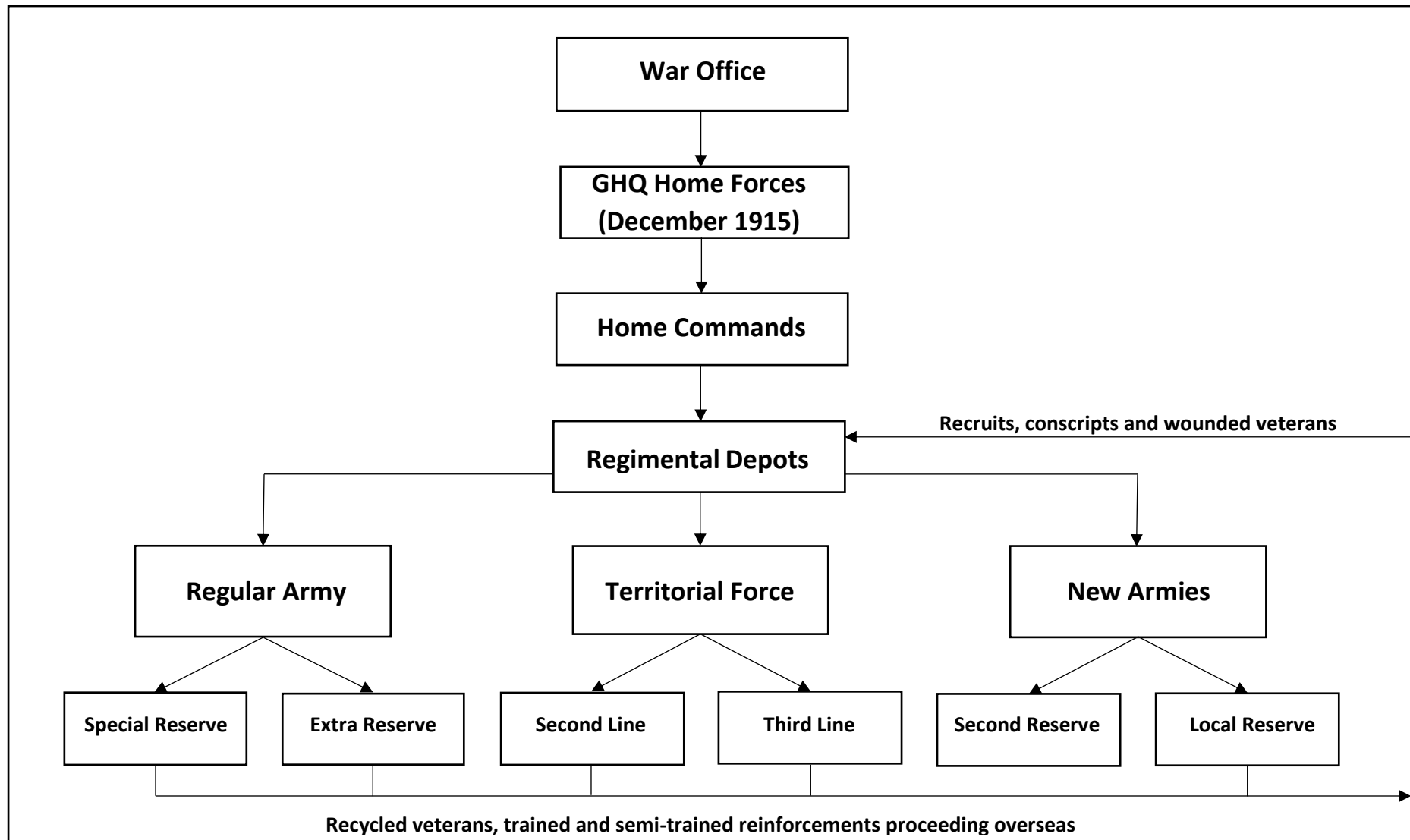
³⁹⁴ Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 50-51 and 60-61.

³⁹⁵ TNA, WO114/27, Regular army return, 13th December 1915.

³⁹⁶ Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 82.

³⁹⁷ *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War*, p. 364.

Figure 2.1: Reinforcement System in the United Kingdom, April 1915 – August 1916



was prioritised below the SR for recruits. The latter were to be maintained at a strength of 2,085, with the surplus sent to the Second Reserve and ER until they reached a strength of 1,500 and 1,020, respectively.³⁹⁸ Although the Local Reserve came under War Office jurisdiction, recruitment was the responsibility of their official sponsor.³⁹⁹ Most SR units rarely reached full strength however due to the rise in casualties and, as a result, most recruits were posted to the SR. This starved the Second Reserve of manpower, which fell in strength from 43,866 other ranks to 32,594 between April and November 1915.⁴⁰⁰ At the regimental level, reserve units, such as the 10th (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment, battled without hope to maintain an efficient output of train reinforcements. Though able to draft 518 reinforcements to its service battalions overseas, they only received 203 recruits from the depot between August and December 1915.⁴⁰¹

Rather than restructure the reinforcement system, the War Office attempted to resolve this through piecemeal solutions. Firstly, reserve units were encouraged to send out recruitment parties into their Home Command, or any part of the country if they were significantly below strength.⁴⁰² The 5th Leinster Regiment, which had received just six recruits in six months, conducted three successful recruitment drives between November and December 1915 and increased the battalion's strength from 230 to 846.⁴⁰³ Others, such as the 10th (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment, had mixed fortunes. Captain J. Best and a party of NCO's gained 150 recruits in Stoke-on-Trent during the summer but gained less than 80 in the autumn. The failure to attract sufficient men was a result of 'fierce competition', which had been caused by a number of different regimental parties recruiting across the town. For instance, recruitment efforts had been held for the 3/5th North Staffordshire Regiment and 11th (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment in September and October, whilst other regiments and corps, including the RFA, Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and

³⁹⁸ TNA, WO293/2, ACI 145, 15th April 1915.

³⁹⁹ HRO, 170A12W/D/3636-3637, History of the 19th (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps.

⁴⁰⁰ TNA WO114/26, Regular army return, 26th April 1915; TNA WO114/27, Regular army return, 8th November 1915.

⁴⁰¹ TNA, WO95/5460, 10th (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment regimental digest.

⁴⁰² TNA, WO293/2, ACI 113, 13th April 1915.

⁴⁰³ Whitton, *Leinster Regiment*, pp. 176-177

Derbyshire Regiment), Middlesex Regiment, Manchester Regiment, Army Service Corps (ASC) and RAMC, competed for men within the town.⁴⁰⁴

This competition was exacerbated by the advantages held by the SR and Local reserve. The former could regularly conduct large recruitment drives, as they had a substantial number of trained soldiers or convalescents who were able to act as recruitment sergeants. From March to August 1915, the 3rd East Yorkshire Regiment undertook several recruitment marches through Hull and used anywhere between 50 and 500 soldiers to canvass.⁴⁰⁵ Though the Local Reserve operated a similar policy by giving men furlough, they had the administrative and financial support of their public or private sponsor. For instance, the British Empire League continued to sponsor its depot companies in the 19th and 22nd (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps and provided additional benefits, such as extra pay and private billeting in London, to those who enlisted. They also financed advertisement campaigns across national and regional newspapers until June 1916, when the Inspector General of the Infantry, Major-General G. A. A. Egerton, halted the practice.⁴⁰⁶

The second solution simply ordered regiments to redistribute recruits between its battalions to ensure 'maximum efficiency'. In June 1915, the War Office stated that if the SR had a strength of over 1,600, then it should transfer recruits across to the Second Reserve until it reached a strength of 500.⁴⁰⁷ Though the limit of 500 was removed in August and Home Commands were ordered to use their own discretion, it led to arbitrary transfers that disrupted regimental ties.⁴⁰⁸ For instance, the 3rd Norfolk Regiment transferred 350 men to the 10th (Reserve) Border Regiment in November 1915, despite the fact that the only connection between the two was their presence in Eastern Command.⁴⁰⁹ It failed to tackle the broader manpower problems and, at best, redistributed manpower to make better use of resources on a temporary basis. Actions such as this enabled the War Office to skirt around the crux of the issue and is representative of the British Army's decentralised culture.

⁴⁰⁴ *Staffordshire Sentinel*, 14th, 21st, and 30th September, and 4th, 8th, and 27th October 1915; TNA WO95/5460, 10th (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment regimental digest.

⁴⁰⁵ TNA, WO95/5459, 3rd East Yorkshire Regiment war diary, March-May 1915 and August 1915.

⁴⁰⁶ *Western Gazette*, 17th December 1915; HRO, TRGJRA, 170A12W/D/3636-D/3637, History of the 19th (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps; IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on 19th (Reserve) and 22nd (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps, 20th June 1916.

⁴⁰⁷ TNA, WO293/2, ACI 208, 20th June 1915.

⁴⁰⁸ TNA, WO293/3, ACI 238, 20th August 1915.

⁴⁰⁹ Petre, *The Norfolk Regiment*, p. 300.

The most damaging aspect was the different terms and conditions given to recruits across the different organisations. Whereas the SR and ER were liable to draft soldiers to any battalion, as allowed under the amended Army Act, the Second Reserve could only send reinforcements to the service battalions of their respective regiment.⁴¹⁰ The Local Reserve was similar to Territorial reserve battalions and, in an attempt to stimulate recruitment, Kitchener promised that drafts would only be sent to their affiliated 'Pals' battalions. This position became exceedingly complicated to maintain due to the number of different depot companies used to form a single reserve battalion. For instance, the 19th (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps was created from companies affiliated to the 16th King's Royal Rifle Corps (Church Lads Brigade) and 17th King's Royal Rifle Corps (British Empire League). Due to War Office restrictions however, only individual companies would be responsible for sending drafts to their respective unit, rather than the whole battalion supplying two active battalions.⁴¹¹

This arrangement was easier to maintain for the Second Reserve, as it merely supplemented what was sent by the SR and ER. All 518 reinforcements dispatched by the 10th (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment were sent to the 7th, 8th and 9th North Staffordshire Regiment in 1915, whilst all but five recruits went on to the same battalions in 1916.⁴¹² This does demonstrate however that the Second Reserve was too weak to support the First, Second and Third New Armies. The service battalions of the Cameronians (Scottish) Rifles became reliant on the 3rd Cameronians (Scottish) Rifles, who drafted 843 men, or 40.8 percent of its drafting total, to them throughout 1915, whilst the 3rd Norfolk Regiment sent 721 to the 7th Norfolk Regiment in September alone.⁴¹³ The Local Reserve suffered a greater disadvantage as, akin to the Territorial reserve, its viability depended upon how many recruits could be supplied by sponsors and the number of casualties suffered overseas. For instance, companies affiliated to the 17th King's Royal Rifle Corps (British Empire League) in the 19th (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps had run out of trained reinforcements within months of the former going overseas. Companies, as discussed, were too small to replenish wastage and the

⁴¹⁰ TNA, WO293/2, ACI 96, 10th April 1915.

⁴¹¹ HRO, 170A12W/D/3636-3637, History of the 19th (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps; TNA, WO293/2, ACI 96, 10th April 1915.

⁴¹² TNA, WO95/5460, 10th (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment regimental digest.

⁴¹³ TNA WO95/5459, 3rd Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) service digest, January-December 1915; Petre, *The Norfolk Regiment*, p. 117.

British Empire League had struggled to recruit replacements due to conscription and the decision to prioritise recruits for the 20th King's Royal Rifle Corps (British Empire League Pioneers). This resulted in the 16th King's Royal Rifle Corps (Church Lads Brigade), who had raised a third company due to a surplus of recruits, drafting men to the 17th King's Royal Rifle Corps (British Empire League) from mid-1916. Despite the frustration this caused, the War Office were forced to break their pledge to ensure the flow of reinforcements overseas.⁴¹⁴

These difficulties expand our understanding of how military identities, as part of Peter Simkins' Four Army' concept, broke down in the British Army. Principally, Simkins claims that by the end of 1915, the British army was composed of the regular army, the New Armies, and the TF, who were separate entities with their own unique identities and traits. These characteristics begun to blur from 1916 however by the 'fourth army', which replenished understrength battalions with conscripts who were enlisted for general service under the Military Service Acts. Combined with wastage, the manpower demands of industry and the use of certain 'class corps', such as the Public Schools Brigade, to provide officer reinforcements, these identities had diluted and eventually replaced with a generic character common across the BEF.⁴¹⁵

Though supported by other historians who agree that the unique recruitment patterns of the New Armies begun to dissipate after the Battle of the Somme in 1916, the evidence above demonstrates that the unique identities of the New Armies begun to breakdown once service battalions proceeded overseas.⁴¹⁶ The First, Second and Third New Armies became reliant upon the SR and ER, who supplied reinforcements to the regular army, whilst the Fourth and Fifth New Armies became reliant upon the Local Reserve as a whole. Though disruptive, it did lead to the development of a broader regimental identity across the regular

⁴¹⁴ *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 27th November 1915; *Newcastle Journal*, 22nd October 1915; *Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser*, 20th November 1915; HRO, 170A12W/D/3636-3637, History of the 19th (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps.

⁴¹⁵ Simkins, Peter, 'The Four Armies, 1914-1918', in Chandler, David. G and Beckett, Ian F. W. (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 235; Simkins, Peter, 'The Raising of the New Armies: Some Further Reflections' in Liddle, Peter (ed.), *Britain Goes to War: How the First World War Began to Reshape the Nation* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2015), pp. 103-105.

⁴¹⁶ Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', pp. 127-152; Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 89; French, David, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People c.1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 277-278; McCartney, Helen, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Mitchinson, *The Territorial Force at War*.

and New Armies. Similar to the experience of 54th (East Anglian) Division in the Sinai and Palestine in 1917, whose unique local identity was replaced with an inclusive regimental spirit based upon its traditions, large parts of the regular army and the First, Second and Third New Armies become synonymous due to its common training experience in the regimental reserve.⁴¹⁷ Though the Fourth and Fifth New Armies do not fit this precise pattern, as most were deployed in 1916 and there is no evidence that they received reinforcements from the SR or ER, they did become reliant upon the entire reserve battalion, as well as the local reserve, which melded multiple local identities from the same region together. Their identity therefore begun to erode once on active service and wastage merely accelerated this process. Chapters six will demonstrate that the common identity of regular and service battalions should, to a certain extent, be expanded to the Territorials, as the quality of training was deemed equally poor by GHQ.

The reinforcement system was therefore unsustainable by the end of 1915. The SR and ER bore little relevance to the needs of individual regiments, whilst the Second Reserve and Local Reserve had compartmentalised the regular reinforcement system. The Territorial Pledge and clash of roles made the Territorial reinforcement system woefully inflexible and therefore incapable of supporting frontline formations. Despite this, it took another nine months before any fundamental structural reforms took place, as the War Office blamed the lack of manpower for these problems. As Grievess argued, the army were adamant about the minimum number of men it required, and it considered anything below this figure to be the crux of their difficulties.⁴¹⁸ To remedy this, conscription through the Military Service Act, 1916, was introduced in January for single men and childless widowers between the ages of 18 and 41. This was implemented after the last voluntary recruitment drive, the Derby Scheme, had failed to produce the desired results. Despite attesting the willingness of 1,150,000 out of 2,179,000 single men to enlist between October and December 1915, only 343,000 of these men were available for duty.⁴¹⁹

The War Office had immense faith that conscription would resolve the growing manpower dilemma and, since January 1915, had discussed their expectations, with one

⁴¹⁷ Kitchen, James E., *The British Imperial Army in the Middle East: Morale and Military Identity in the Sinai and Palestine Campaigns, 1916-1918* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 135-138.

⁴¹⁸ Grievess, *The Politics of Manpower*, pp. 21-22.

⁴¹⁹ Beckett, 'The nation in arms', pp. 12-13; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 155-156.

report claiming as many as 4,653,000 men could be gained. Even this, however, failed to supply the number of men desired by the War Office, as Military Service Tribunals gave exemptions to a large proportion of eligible men. Comprised of local dignitaries with managerial experience and knowledge of the local economic and social issues, Military Service Tribunals were tasked with evaluating applications for exemption. With little knowledge of government intentions, differing local demographic conditions and a lack of experience, largescale inconsistencies emerged between tribunals.⁴²⁰ As a result, 839,000 of 1,029,000 men conscripted were awarded some form of exemption during the first three months of 1916.⁴²¹ This shortfall was exacerbated by the decision to provide a definitive allotment of recruits to all supporting arms and special branches of the infantry, such as the Foot Guards, regardless of the monthly intake. Though this enabled branches such as the artillery and cavalry to provide adequate drafts, it led to shortages in the infantry, who were suffering from the highest wastage rate.⁴²² This shortfall quickly led to the Military Service Act (No. 2), 1916, in June, which made all men between the ages of 18 and 41 liable for conscription. This improved the situation and, within the first year of conscription, 809,272 men of various medical categories were obtained. Yet, this was still deemed inadequate by the Army Council, who had demanded a minimum of 940,000 for operations in 1917.⁴²³

The Military Service Acts did, however, remove the need for a Territorial to sign the ISO before serving overseas. This made all home service Territorials automatically available for active service in June 1916 and all soldiers passed as medically fit were transferred to the third line.⁴²⁴ The removal of the Territorial Pledge also broke down the artificial barriers and made all Territorials, like their regular counterparts, liable for general service. This gave the War Office full flexibility to deal with any sudden demands and, despite previous criticisms that this would erode territorial identities, was the most significant and successful change made to the Territorial reinforcement system.

⁴²⁰ McDermott, James, *British Military Service Tribunals, 1916-1918: 'a very much abused body of men'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp. 11-35.

⁴²¹ TNA, WO162/27, Memorandum on compulsory service [ND] c. May 1915; TNA, WO162/28, Recruitment area returns until 11th March 1916.

⁴²² TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office.

⁴²³ WO33/881, Army Council meetings, January-December 1916; McDermott, *British Military Service Tribunals*, p. 25.

⁴²⁴ TNA, WO293/4, ACI 7, 3rd January 1916, ACI 301, 6th February 1916, ACI 552, 11th March 1916, ACI 1140, 6th June 1916 and ACI 1260, 23rd June 1916.

An odd situation emerges however when the growing manpower crisis is compared to the overall strength of the regular and Territorial reserve system. Rather than a consistent decline, as expected, the strength of most units increased from January 1915. The 3rd Connaught Rangers, who struggled to reach a strength of 1,194 all ranks by December 1914, rocketed in size to 2,924 men by August 1915.⁴²⁵ Other battalions, such as the 3rd Essex Regiment and 3rd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, had reached a strength of 3,221 and 3,222 all ranks by June and July 1915, respectively.⁴²⁶ Nevertheless, this was caused by pre-war planning in 1912 by the Director of Military Operations, Brigadier-General Henry Wilson, who decided that all wounded and convalescent soldiers should be brought to the UK for treatment. Though the RAMC had advocated the accommodation of convalescents in 'Special Disposal Depots' since 1905, only 4,750 hospital beds had been reserved for this function by August 1914.⁴²⁷

Unsurprisingly, convalescents vastly outnumbered the allotted beds and caused considerable backlogs in hospitals. To create space, many were transferred to smaller institutions, including civil hospitals, smaller military hospitals, private and public auxiliary hospitals, private convalescent homes, and a soldier's residence.⁴²⁸ By October, the system was under such strain that the War Office urged the maximum use of convalescent homes in the area. This, in turn, led to many soldiers being lost within the system, as convalescents were rushed to small or private convalescent homes that were outside the immediate jurisdiction of the army. It also increased wastage, as many soldiers who could have recovered through prolonged treatment were deprived of specialist care.⁴²⁹

This influenced the War Office to announce that all soldiers considered fit for general service or 'light duty' should be automatically sent back, often without warning, to their

⁴²⁵ TNA, WO79/40, 3rd Connaught Rangers service digest, 31st December 1914 and 7th August 1915.

⁴²⁶ TNA, WO95/5495, 3rd King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry war diary, 1st July 1915; Burrows, *Essex Units*, p. 182.

⁴²⁷ Harrison, Mark, *The Medical War: British Military Medicine in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 16-20; Macpherson, W. G., *History of the Great War based on Official Documents: Medical Services, General History, Vol. I: Medical services in the United Kingdom; in British garrisons overseas; and during operations against Tsingtau in Togoland, the Cameroons and South-West Africa* (London: HMSO, 1921), pp. 3-4 and 17-19.

⁴²⁸ TNA, WO293/1, ACI 134, 17th August 1914; Macpherson, *Medical Services, General History, Vol. I*, p. 96.

⁴²⁹ TNA, WO293/1, ACI 11, 2nd October 1914, ACI 117, 16th October 1914 and ACI 332, 30th October 1914; Cooter, Roger, *Surgery and Society in Peace and War: Organization of Modern Medicine, 1880-1948* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993), pp. 113-114.

corresponding SR or ER battalion.⁴³⁰ Table 2.3 and table 2.4, based upon the regular and Territorial returns between March 1915 and July 1916, demonstrates the impact this decision had upon the composition of other ranks in both reserve systems. The start date and end date were chosen for how the War Office presented its statistics, as records differentiated between fit and unfit personnel, with a number of subcategories within each group. War Office categorisation changed after this and made further comparison unobtainable. In relation to the TF, second line formations were not included. The War Office refused to integrate them into the Territorial reserve system and the third line had been ordered to receive all medical convalescents from March 1915.⁴³¹

Between March 1915 and January 1916, the proportion of soldiers in the regular reserve considered unfit or unavailable for general service rocketed from 54,341 to 120,902 men, or 33.4 to 44 percent. This disproportionately effected the SR and ER who, at its height in January 1916, had 53.6 percent of men unfit for general service. In comparison, the Local Reserve had less than 20 percent throughout 1915, whilst the Second Reserve was at 37.9 percent in December 1915. Even then, a proportion of unfit men in the Second Reserve and Local Reserve were older soldiers who had enlisted for home service as instructors. For the latter, the low number of convalescent and permanently wounded soldiers was due to the delayed deployment of Pals battalions overseas, with most departing after December 1915. Although the proportion of fit to unfit men in the regular reserve system rose to over 70 percent in June 1916, this represented the impact of conscription and, as will be discussed, the redistribution of unfit personnel. The Territorial third line experienced a similar downward spiral. Although they had a fit to unfit ratio of 88.8 percent in September 1915, this had dropped to the same levels as the regular reserve system in July 1916 at 66.5 percent. The belated deployment of TF divisions throughout 1915, as well as the decision to send the 43rd (Wessex) Division, 44th (Home Counties) Division and 45th (2nd Wessex) Division to India for garrison duty, had delayed this downward trend, but it was unavoidable as more formations were sent to active theatres.

⁴³⁰ TNA, WO293/1, ACI 107, 10th October 1914; TNA, WO293/2, ACI 20, 3rd March 1915; Wheeler-Holohan and Wyatt, *The Ranger's*, p. 259.

⁴³¹ TNA, WO293/2, ACI 243, 25th March 1915.

Table 2.3: Total fit and unfit other ranks in regular reserve system, 1915-1916.⁴³²

Date	SR and ER		Second Reserve		Local Reserve		Total:		
	Fit*	Unfit**	Fit*	Unfit**	Fit*	Unfit**	Total Fit	Total unfit	Total Fit to Unfit Ratio (%)
01/03/1915	108,535	54,341					108,535	54,341	66.6
29/03/1915	107,656	58,521					107,656	58,521	64.8
26/04/1915	116,053	62,902	43,866	5,630			159,919	68,532	70
24/05/1915	103,807	67,419	45,109	6,278			148,916	73,697	66.9
21/06/1915	124,805	74,869	49,615	6,810			174,420	81,679	68.1
19/07/1915	117,904	83,356	52,579	8,029	20,871	4,206	191,354	95,591	66.7
16/08/1915	114,863	83,793	47,972	10,120	28,073	5,513	190,908	99,426	65.8
13/09/1915	104,822	90,992	43,371	12,092	29,131	6,809	177,324	109,893	61.7
11/10/1915	91,739	86,602	32,097	13,678	30,586	6,717	154,422	106,997	59.1
08/11/1915	88,308	89,144	32,594	16,083	35,008	7,430	155,910	112,657	58.1
06/12/1915	89,905	93,950	38,345	19,064	44,214	9,140	172,464	122,154	58.5
03/01/1916	76,954	89,059	33,253	20,260	43,964	11,213	154,171	120,902	56
31/01/1916	84,453	89,742	41,738	19,932	46,509	11,228	172,700	120,902	58.8
28/02/1916	91,583	84,637	46,074	19,551	50,065	10,124	187,722	114,312	62.2
27/03/1916	88,656	82,190	49,452	20,740	50,548	10,520	188,656	113,450	62.4
24/04/1916	93,006	74,989	59,959	22,061	54,111	11,633	207,076	108,683	65.6
22/05/1916	91,525	68,945	65,880	20,615	54,487	11,933	211,892	101,493	67.6
19/06/1916	101,799	66,109	75,510	21,144	62,098	13,202	239,407	100,455	70.4
17/07/1916	102,706	62,426	70,495	23,084	62,710	13,562	235,911	99,072	69.4

*This includes recruits, trained drafts and returned convalescents

**This includes temporarily unavailable, permanently unfit and convalescents.

⁴³² TNA, WO114/26, Regular army return, 26th April 1915; TNA, WO114/57, Regular army returns, 24th May, 21st June, 19th July and 16th August 1915; TNA, WO114/27, Regular army returns, 13th September, 11th October, 8th November and 3rd December 1915; TNA, WO114/28, Regular army returns, 3rd January, 31st January, 28th February, 27th March and 24th April 1916; TNA, WO114/29, Regular army returns, 22nd May, 19th June and 17th July 1916.

Table 2.4: Total fit and unfit other ranks in Territorial third line.⁴³³

Date:	Total Fit**	Total unfit***	Total fit to unfit ratio (%)
16/08/1915	78,780	13,078	85.8
13/09/1915	81,426	18,440	88.8
11/10/1915	79,280	27,809	79.5
08/11/1915	87,515	37,577	70.0
06/12/1915	111,426	44,256	71.5
31/01/1916	108,326	48,965	68.9
13/03/1916*	125,935	49,878	71.6
27/03/1916	125,840	51,354	71.0
24/04/1916	144,831	52,587	73.4
22/05/1916	140,815	52,939	72.7
19/06/1917	133,933	54,715	71.0
17/07/1917	118,693	59,890	66.5

*Army return for 13/03/1916 used as figures for 28/02/1916 were never published.

**This includes recruits, trained drafts and returned convalescents

***This includes temporarily unavailable, permanently unfit and convalescents.

Though this decision created firmer administrative control over wounded personnel, the massive influx added considerable strain onto the reserve system in three ways. Firstly, COs and their staff, who were tasked with rapidly training and dispatching reinforcements, were now required to dedicate a significant proportion of their time to rehabilitating convalescents, despite their lack of medical expertise. Secondly, convalescents drained the reserve system of finite resources. Although convalescents were held as supernumerary to a unit's establishment, they filled up a significant proportion of beds and barrack space, which would have affected the ability of each unit to house and administer new recruits. Lastly, a significant proportion of convalescents were permanently unfit and could not be rehabilitated. Most were kept on strength however, which led to a rapid increase in the number of men unable to perform basic military duties.⁴³⁴ For instance, the number of permanently unfit men rose from 18,434 to 46,453 in the SR and ER between March 1915 and March 1916, whilst the Territorial third line had an increase from 1,072 to 19,850 between August 1915 and July 1916. Reserve units were forced to create several supernumerary

⁴³³ TNA, WO114/45, TF returns, 16th August, 13th September, 11th October, 8th November 1915 and 6th December 1915; TNA, WO114/46, TF return, 3rd January, 31st January, 13th March, 27th March and 24th April 1916; TNA, WO114/47, TF returns, 22nd May, 19th June and 17th July 1916.

⁴³⁴ Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 214.

companies of convalescents and the results were damaging, as reserve battalions became a, “clearing house’ for officers and men wounded at the front’.⁴³⁵

Despite Jeffrey S. Reznick’s claim that the War Office discharged disabled soldiers who were unlikely to make a quick recovery after treatment, the large number of unfit soldiers in the reserve system challenges this interpretation. Though a proportion were discharged and, at times, provided vocational training, as the parsimonious government were unwilling to sponsor a comprehensive after-care scheme that restored the health of all disabled serviceman, the War Office saw a significant proportion as a manpower reserve that, with time, could be rehabilitated and reused as experienced drafts.⁴³⁶ The sizable and consistent number of healed convalescents, or recycled reinforcements, returning for active duty underpinned this. Table 2.5 and table 2.6, based upon the same criteria discussed above, outlines the contribution of recycled reinforcements to the drafting pool within the regular and Territorial reserve system, respectively. For the former, the number available for drafting equated to a sizable 8 to 12 percent of available manpower from October 1915 and, at its height, constituted 21,938 experienced soldiers. In the SR and ER, recycled reinforcements formed 21.5 percent of available manpower for drafting in January 1916. Although the Territorial third line had a lower proportion at 3 to 8.6 percent, this still constituted at one point over 10,000 veterans.

To expand the number of convalescents and permanently unfit men returning to active duty, the War Office introduced a sophisticated system of medical administration and care. The concept of recycling manpower back into the reserve system became an important aspect of British medical and reinforcement policy and was expanded in January 1916 to include conscripts. With growing difficulties in obtaining sufficient manpower, the War Office

⁴³⁵ TNA, WO79/40, 3rd Connaught Rangers service digest, 29th May 1915; TNA, WO114/26, Regular army return, 1st March 1915; TNA, WO114/28, Regular army return, 13th March 1916; TNA, WO114/45, TF return, 16th August 1915; TNA, WO114/47, TF return, 17th July 1916; Mullaly, B. R., *The South Lancashire Regiment* (Bristol: The White Swan Press, 1952), p. 341.

⁴³⁶ Anderson, Julie and Perry, Heather E., ‘Rehabilitation and restoration: orthopaedics and disabled soldiers in Germany and Britain in the First World War’, *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 30:4 (2014), pp. 234-237 and 242-245; Meyer, Jessica, ‘Conserving British Manpower during and after the First World War’, in Delaney, Douglas E., Frost, Mark and Brown, Andrew L. (eds), *Manpower and the Armies of the British Empire in the Two World Wars* (London: Cornell University Press, 2021), pp. 53-54; Reznick, Jeffrey S., *Healing the Nation: Soldiers and the Culture of Caregiving in Britain during the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 120-121.

Table 2.5: Composition of drafting pool in the regular reserve system, 1915-1916.⁴³⁷

	SR and ER		Second Reserve		Local Reserve		Total		
Date	New drafts*	Returned Convalescents**	New drafts	Returned Convalescents	New drafts	Returned Convalescents	Total new drafts	Total returned convalescents	Convalescent to new draft ratio (%)
01/03/1915	101,773	6,762					101,773	6,762	6.2
29/03/1915	100,416	7,240					100,416	7,240	6.7
26/04/1915	107,229	8,824	43,864	2			151,093	8,826	5.5
24/05/1915	96,459	7,348	45,105	4			141,564	7,352	5.2
21/06/1915	117,793	7,012	49,607	8			167,400	7,020	4.2
19/07/1915	109,554	8,350	52,569	10	20871	0	182,994	8,360	4.4
16/08/1915	105,544	9,319	47,958	14	28071	2	181,573	9,335	4.9
13/09/1915	95,142	9,680	43,353	18	29129	2	167,624	9,700	5.5
11/10/1915	79,320	12,419	32,067	30	30586	0	141,973	12,449	8.1
08/11/1915	73,459	14,849	32,267	327	35008	0	140,734	15,176	9.7
06/12/1915	73,678	16,227	37,269	1,076	44214	0	155,161	17,303	10
03/01/1916	61,348	15,606	31,765	1,488	43,951	13	137,064	17,107	11.1
31/01/1916	66,308	18,145	39,409	2,329	46,460	49	152,177	20,523	11.9
28/02/1916	72,622	18,961	43,232	2,842	49,930	135	165,784	21,938	11.7
27/03/1916	72,764	15,892	47,067	2,385	50,285	263	170,116	18,540	9.8
24/04/1916	77,740	15,266	57,232	2,727	53,728	383	188,700	18,376	8.9
22/05/1916	76,587	14,938	62,778	3,102	53,897	590	193,262	18,630	8.8
19/06/1916	87,021	14,778	72,102	3,408	61,271	827	220,394	19,013	7.9
17/07/1916	87,992	14,714	66,720	3,775	61,612	1,098	216,324	19,587	8.3

*This includes recruits and trained drafts

**This only includes convalescents that have been passed as medically fit for drafting.

⁴³⁷ TNA, WO114/26, Regular army return, 26th April 1915; TNA, WO114/57, Regular army returns, 24th May, 21st June, 19th July and 16th August 1915; TNA, WO114/27, Regular army returns, 13th September, 11th October, 8th November and 3rd December 1915; TNA, WO114/28, Regular army returns, 3rd January, 31st January, 28th February, 27th March and 24th April 1916; TNA, WO114/29, Regular army returns, 22nd May, 19th June and 17th July 1916.

Table 2.6 Composition of drafting pool in the Territorial third line, 1915-1916.⁴³⁸

Date	New Drafts**	Returned Convalescents***	Ratio of convalescents to new drafts (%)
16/08/1915	76,614	2,166	2.7
13/09/1915	79,024	2,402	2.9
11/10/1915	76,923	2,357	3
08/11/1915	84,058	3,457	5
06/12/1915	106,568	4,858	4.4
03/01/1916	110,848	5,665	4.9
31/01/1916	101,690	6,636	5.3
13/03/1916*	115,083	10,852	8.6
27/03/1916	115,296	10,544	8.4
24/04/1916	134,289	10,002	6.9
22/05/1916	131,720	9,095	6.5
19/06/1916	125,273	8,720	6.5
17/07/1916	110,627	8,066	6.8

* Army returns for 13/03/1916 used as figures for 28/02/1916 never published.

**This includes recruits, trained drafts and returned convalescents

***This includes temporarily unavailable, permanently unfit and convalescents.

began to draft men deemed unfit for general service and, between January and March 1916, conscripted 61,000 unfit men.⁴³⁹ Though the logic of enlisting these men can be questioned, especially when the growing demand for labour in industry is considered, they could be used to expand, and relieve fit men in, rearward services, such as the Army Ordnance Corps and ASC.⁴⁴⁰ In addition, a sizable proportion would become fit for some form of active service. Many of the first patients admitted to the Orthopaedics' 'curative workshops' at the Shepherd's Bush Military Hospital in London were unfit conscripts, who, after minor reconstructive surgery and rehabilitation for ailments such as club foot, claw foot and flat feet, were reclassified as fit for military service.⁴⁴¹

To increase the output of recycled reinforcements, three key policies were adopted: the creation of sophisticated medical categorisation, travelling medical boards (TMB) and Command Depots. Before November 1915, medical categorisation of soldiers was broad and

⁴³⁸ TNA, WO114/45, TF returns, 16th August, 13th September, 11th October, 8th November and 6th December 1915; TNA, WO114/46, TF returns, 3rd January, 31st January, 13th March, 27th March and 24th April 1916; TNA, WO114/47, TF returns, 22nd May, 19th June and 17th July 1916.

⁴³⁹ TNA, WO162/28, Memorandum from Registrar General, 8th April 1916.

⁴⁴⁰ TNA, WO293/4, ACI 456, 29th February 1916.

⁴⁴¹ Cooter, *Surgery and Society*, p. 118.

consisted of four categories; fit for service at home or abroad, temporarily unfit for service, fit for service at home only and unfit for service. From the introduction of the Derby Scheme in November 1915 to the introduction of the Military Service Acts (No.2), 1916, in June, medical categorisation became increasingly elaborate, dividing soldiers between the following categories and grades:

A: Men fit for general service and capable of being able to march, see to shoot and withstand active service conditions.

- (i) Men available for service overseas and considered fully trained, physically and mentally fit.
- (ii) Recruits who would be in Ai after completing training
- (iii) Convalescents from an expeditionary force and require hardening to reach Ai
- (iv) Recruits under the age of 19

B: Fit for service conditions abroad, but not for general service. This includes work on the Lines of Communication and Imperial Garrisons.

- (i) Garrison or provisional units.
- (ii) Labour units or outdoor employment.
- (iii) Sedentary work.

C: Fit for Home Service only

- (i) Garrison unit.
- (ii) Labour unit or outdoor employment.
- (iii) Sedentary work.

D: Men unfit for categories A, B or C, but likely to become fit in six months.

E: Men unfit for categories A, B or C and unlikely to become fit in six months.⁴⁴²

This was necessary, as it relieved reserve battalions of administrative burdens and non-critical military duties by linking various medical categories with specific tasks. For instance, the SR and ER had used a proportion of recruits and trained soldiers to undertake garrison duties at localities such as ports, as their secondary role was to defend points of military interest. This disrupted their ability to train and field drafts as battalions, such as the 3rd Connaught Rangers, who had to provide a number of small garrisons, including a group of 52 and 14 soldiers at Waterville and Ballinskelligs respectively to defend the trans-Atlantic cable stations. To alleviate this, men of C category were formed into garrison companies and,

⁴⁴² Hine, *Haig's Armies*, pp. 307-308; Macpherson, *Medical Services, General History*, Vol. I, pp. 120-124.

by the end of 1915, 21,808 out of 38,615 men previously classified as 'permanently unfit' were used for this purpose. By the beginning of 1916, home service garrison battalions were created, and the number of personnel deemed unfit for duty in the SR and ER dropped by roughly 30,000. This was replicated in response to other responsibilities, with large quantities of 'B' and 'C' graded personnel being transferred to provisional battalions and labour battalions to undertake regimental employments, home defence and routine labour. Although issues continued in relation to 'A' grade recruits being withheld for non-military duties, these changes relieved administrative pressure and enabled reserve battalions to concentrate upon training drafts and rehabilitating convalescents.⁴⁴³

Many of these units were also tasked with holding soldiers of low medical categories with the aim of rehabilitating them through basic military training. They should therefore be recognised as second tier reserve units that provided a constant trickle of manpower back into the reserve system. For example, an estimated 300 'B' graded men had been sent to each battalion within the 9th Provisional Brigade in August 1916. Though tasked with home defence duties on the Kentish coast, it was expected that most, if not all these soldiers, would be reclassified as 'A' grade within a few months.⁴⁴⁴ Although positive, some of the choices made by the War Office were questionable, as seen by the decision to transfer 'B' and 'C' graded recruits to second line Territorial divisions from April 1916.⁴⁴⁵ By July 1916, the 65th (2nd Lowland) Division had 6,892 'A' grade men and 4,079 of lower medical categories, which made little sense for formations expected to go overseas. This dilemma was finally resolved in August 1916, when all 'A' graded personnel were transferred overseas to replace the casualties caused by the Somme Campaign.⁴⁴⁶ Although this firmly fixed the role of the second line upon home defence after two years of indecision, it demonstrates the large number of unfit soldiers, whether convalescents or conscripts, retained at home by the British Army. Nevertheless, the introduction of medical categories economised the use of unfit soldiers and created a system that recycled a proportion of them back into the frontline.

⁴⁴³ IWM, 13802, Unsent report by Egerton on 5th Middlesex Regiment, August 1916; TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office.

⁴⁴⁴ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on 9th Provisional Brigade, 9th August 1916.

⁴⁴⁵ TNA, WO293/5, ACI 732, 4th April 1916.

⁴⁴⁶ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on 65th (2nd Lowland) Division, 11th-13th July 1916; TNA, WO293/5, ACI 1509, 2nd August 1916.

The second policy was the creation of TMBs, which underpinned the process of recycling manpower back into the reserve system. Formed in July 1915 and defined further in September 1915, TMBs consisted of two medical officers and one combatant officer to verify and classify all men deemed unfit. They were given complete authority to override any local decision made by medical officers and no man could be discharged until they were assessed by a TMB. In theory, they were an independent medical body that could identify any inconsistencies at the regimental level and enforce uniformity based upon War Office criteria. By doing so, they aimed to reduce 'wastage' and increase the number of men transferred back to active duty. This was desperately needed, as consistency and quality control were not always exercised; in September 1915 alone, an estimated 15,801 men had been classed as 'temporary unfit' for longer than sixty days, despite the fact that they were meant to have been re-evaluated during this period. Although it is impossible to calculate the impact TMBs had, the War Office placed great faith in them and ensured there was one for every military district by June 1916.⁴⁴⁷

However, the methods adopted by TMBs were increasingly indiscriminate and, in an attempt to maximise their output, transferred unfit soldiers back to active service. For example, Inspector-General of the Infantry, Major-General G. A. A. Egerton, wrote to GHQ Home Forces on multiple occasions to highlight the plight of individual soldiers and the irregularities he witnessed. Private Taylor, who was wounded at Gallipoli, was categorised by regimental authorities as 'C III' and sent to the 85th provisional battalion for clerical duties. Afterwards, the TMB passed him as 'A' in May 1916 and transferred him to either the 4th or 5th Somerset Light Infantry. Upon arrival, however, the medical officer immediately declared him unfit and marked him for discharge. In another incident, Egerton reported how he saw eight men, who in his opinion would never become efficient soldiers again, declared fit by a TMB at the 9th (Reserve) Bedfordshire Regiment. These incidents led to unfit soldiers being drafted. Private T. G. Stickle, selected to go overseas by the 3/5th Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment), was refused by the embarkation officer as he had no vision in his right eye and was suspected of shell shock.⁴⁴⁸ The TMB's role of quality control was therefore compromised

⁴⁴⁷ TNA, WO293/3, ACI 103, 13th July 1915 and ACI 337, 27th November 1915; TNA, WO293/4, ACI 1163, 9th June 1916; Macpherson, *Medical Services, General History, Vol. I*, pp. 120-121.

⁴⁴⁸ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on Territorial 3rd Line, 11th-12th May, 3rd Thames and Medway SR Brigade, 7th June 1916 and 10th Provisional Brigade, 8th August 1916.

and represented the militarisation of medicine allured to within the broader historiography. Specifically, that doctors and medical services not only had a duty to their patient, but to the state and army to ensure wounded men were quickly recycled back into the frontline.⁴⁴⁹ As one unknown officer allegedly declared, 'my orders are to mark every possible man up to A – any man is good enough for this trench warfare, [as] marching is not required.'⁴⁵⁰

The final policy was the creation of Command Depots in each Home Command, which were designed to improve the rate of convalescents returning to active duty. Established in October 1915, the primary aim of these institutions was twofold. Firstly, it was created to relieve regimental reserves, as well as military hospitals and auxiliary medical institutions, of convalescent soldiers. Secondly, it was designed to speed up the recovery of these men for frontline service. Whilst men who required long term care were sent to one of 20 orthopaedic centres in Britain, which assisted wounded and disabled veterans return to civilian life, men who could make a full recovery with specialised medical care in six months were sent to Command Depots. Graduated exercises, therapeutic gymnastics, and muscle massages, amongst other procedures, were utilised to strengthen soldiers and speed up their recovery. This should be recognised as a significant advancement in the rehabilitation of wounded soldiers, as an estimated 75,500 beds had been reserved for this purpose by April 1918.⁴⁵¹

Yet, there were a number of teething issues, as reserve units did not understand their function. By December 1915, the Army Council had to inform COs that there were a large number of spaces available at Command Depots and convalescents should be transferred immediately. Medical officers were also criticised for misunderstanding their role, as many of the soldiers sent still required hospital care.⁴⁵² Others, who may have benefitted from this procedure, were often lost sight of once transferred elsewhere. In Egerton's opinion, a

⁴⁴⁹ Bergen, Leo Van, *Before My Helpless Sight: Suffering, Dying and Military Medicine on the Western Front, 1914–1918* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 359–361; Carden-Coyne, Ana, *The Politics of Wounds: Military Patients and Medical Power in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 4–5, 10–11, 78–82 and 338–339; Davenport, Paul, 'Remaking the Fighting Man: Martial Masculinity and the British Army's Command Depots, 1915–1918', *Contemporary British History*, 30:3 (2016), pp. 349–367; Meyer, Jessica, *An Equal Burden: The Men of the Royal Army Medical Corps in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 3–6; Perry, Heather E., *Recycling the Disabled: Army, Medicine, and Modernity in WW1 Germany* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), pp. 3–10, 87–88, 160 and 197–206.

⁴⁵⁰ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on 64th (2nd Highland) Division, 7th–9th March 1917.

⁴⁵¹ Anderson and Perry, 'Rehabilitation and restoration', p. 243; Cooter, *Surgery and Society*, pp. 105–106; Davenport, 'Remaking the Fighting Man', pp. 351–352; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 66–67; Macpherson, *Medical Services, General History, Vol. I*, pp. 91 and 114.

⁴⁵² TNA, WO293/3, ACI 133 and 274, 12th and 24th December 1915.

'hopeless proportion' of wounded had been sent to provisional battalions on the coastline, despite the fact that many, if sent to a Command Depot, could have become fit again.⁴⁵³ Nevertheless, a sizable number of convalescents received specialist medical care and subsequently became fit. Created in February 1916, the London Command Depot had rehabilitated at least 1,039 men by October and was, at that time, caring for nearly 4,300 men. Along with the Eastern Command Depot, based at Shoreham-on-Sea, the only criticism directed towards them was the lack of military equipment and refresher training provided.⁴⁵⁴ Collectively, the expansion of medical services in the reinforcement system was vital for recycling manpower back into the military and demonstrates the medicalisation of war. Medicine was systematically incorporated from 1915 and the efforts to militarise, centralise, and rationalise medical care in the quest for greater (manpower) efficiency, ensured medical services became a significant component in the management of manpower and, more broadly, modern warfare.⁴⁵⁵

In addition to these challenges, the reserve system was responsible for ensuring reinforcements were fully trained and capable of integrating with their battalion overseas. Yet, within a few months of war, criticisms about the quality of drafts and their training had begun to circulate.⁴⁵⁶ Whilst an analysis of the training programme, including its usefulness in combat, are outside the remit of this analysis, it is critical to gauge how effective reserve battalions were at propagating it within the 12, and then 14, week timeframe established by the War Office. Despite its importance, reinforcement training has received limited attention within broader historiography, with historians focusing upon the development of learning, training, and dissemination of knowledge within the various citizen armies overseas. Even this does not cover reinforcement training within active theatres, which will be considered in chapter six.⁴⁵⁷ Nevertheless, there are four criterion that need to be achieved to create a

⁴⁵³ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on 4th Provisional Brigade, 24th August 1916.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, Report of London Command Depot, 24th May and 6th October 1916, and report of Eastern Command Depot, 20th October 1916.

⁴⁵⁵ Anderson and Perry, 'Rehabilitation and restoration', pp. 229 and 247-248; Cooter, *Surgery and Society*, pp. 119-120; Harris, Mark, 'The Medicalization of War - The Militarization of Medicine', *The Society for the Social History of Medicine*, 9:2 (1996), p. 267; Perry, *Recycling the Disabled*, pp. 7-10, 87-88, 160 and 202-206.

⁴⁵⁶ TNA, PRO30/57/51/8-9, Letter from GOC IV Corps, Lieutenant-General Henry Rawlinson to Kitchener, 1st and 14th December 1914.

⁴⁵⁷ Fox, Aimée, *Learning to Fight: Military Innovation and Change in the British Army, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 5-9; Williams, Basil, *Raising and Training the New Armies* (London: Constable, 1918), pp. 126-140.

consistent turnover of trained personnel. Omitting the recognition of reserve battalions as solely training formations, as the impact of secondary roles has been discussed in length, this includes the steady supply of raw recruits, the adequate provision of equipment and training infrastructure, and a stable corps of trained instructors under competent leadership. Overall, the reserve system failed to meet these criterion.

Admittedly, a steady supply of raw recruits was impossible under the voluntary recruitment model. With an inability to control the number or direction of men enlisting into the armed forces, the training regime could not become efficient. Akin to the problems faced by the Edwardian Army, uneven recruitment and fluctuating numbers ensured the training system could never reach full capacity and would have to deal with a consistent trickle of recruits who needed basic training. The SR had, however, pioneered a logical system of draft training within two months of mobilisation. The 3rd East Yorkshire Regiment trained men in 'recruit companies' that were formed around a cohort of trained soldiers and instructors. These groups would collectively undertake their training during the initial 12, and then 14, week programme and, once completed, were transferred into a 'service company' that provided drafts. Although the Army Council never enforced this as a standardised practice, a proportion of the reserve system followed a variation of it by 1916.⁴⁵⁸

With the introduction of conscription however, the War Office could create an economic and scientific model of recruit distribution that produced a steady supply of manpower.⁴⁵⁹ Yet, the lack of communication between reserve battalions, Home Commands and the War Office undermined this. Theoretically, the War Office called up men and ordered them to attend their local regimental depot. If passed fit, each Home Command allocated them to regiments according to individual need. Yet, the Army Council stipulated that recruits must be posted to the reserve unit with the lowest strength until full.⁴⁶⁰ This created an increasingly intermittent distribution system, with units only receiving recruits once their strength reached a critical level. For instance, the 14th (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps received no recruits between December 1915 and May 1916 but was then flooded over a two

⁴⁵⁸ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on Dover SR Brigade, 30th May 1916 and 3rd Thames and Medway SR Brigade, 27th October 1916; TNA, WO95/5495, 3rd East Yorkshire Regiment war diary, 9th September 1914; TNA, WO293/1, ACI 1, 1st November 1914; Bowman and Connolly, *The Edwardian Army*, pp. 66-67; Williams, *New Armies*, pp. 130-132.

⁴⁵⁹ TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office.

⁴⁶⁰ TNA, WO293/4, ACI 212, 26th January 1916.

week period with 1,532 recruits. This led to two extremes, where reserves units were operating substantially below or above capacity. When low in strength, the resources allocated to battalions, including instructors and equipment, were wasted. Once refilled, reserve units were administratively overwhelmed and, similar to the recruitment spikes in 1914, struggled to organise large quantities of men. This, in turn, led to delays and resulted in training either being rushed, extended, or bypassed, despite the fact that other battalions remained understrength. For instance, the 15th (Reserve) Middlesex Regiment received 1,500 men in five weeks, whereas the 11th (Reserve) East Surrey Regiment, which were a 'skeleton formation' of 587 men in the same Brigade, obtained none. Though the Inspector-General of the Infantry, Major-General G. A. A. Egerton, blamed regimental depots for this haphazard distribution, the decentralised culture of the British Army was to blame, as neither Home Commands nor the War Office attempted to impose any kind of control. This led to reserve units periodically running out of trained soldiers and having to use partially-trained recruits to fill drafts, which reached critical proportions during the Battle of the Somme. Only 37,478 of 106,522 recruits were deemed trained on 26th June 1916 and, once casualties mounted after 1st July, the War Office agreed to draft 30,000 reinforcements of nine or more weeks training to make up the shortfall.⁴⁶¹

The Second criterion was equipment and training infrastructure. As Simkins has demonstrated, Britain's pre-war military industry was limited to a small number of firms and the General Ordnance factories. Neither had any provision for a protracted, European conflict, let alone the capabilities of supporting a massive expansion of the armed forces. Although the 'Shell Crisis' led to the creation of the Ministry of Munitions in May 1915, there was a serious shortage of equipment in reserve units from 1914 to 1916. This was due to reserve units coming third in priority, below the various expeditionary forces and New Armies.⁴⁶²

These shortages manifested themselves in different parts of the reserve system and were due to a combination of prejudice and timing. More fortunate than most, the SR and ER held equipment on the outbreak of war and, due to their immediate role of training and home

⁴⁶¹ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on number of recruits with over three months service, 15th May 1916 and 4th and 5th Reserve Brigades, 9th-10th and 23rd-24th May 1916; TNA WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 28th June 1916; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 108 and 117.

⁴⁶² TNA, WO163/46, 125th Army Council meeting, 5th June 1915; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 278-286.

defence, were not required to surrender it. Although the influx of recruits stretched these finite resources, providing service equipment for large garrisons and detachments was the biggest hindrance. For instance, musketry practice was consistently delayed for the 6th Rifle Brigade, as 500 of the 1,278 rifles it possessed were used by garrisons.⁴⁶³ Despite this, the SR and ER were prioritised above all other formations and did receive additional equipment when needed. In comparison, second and third line Territorial units faced considerable prejudice and the equipment allotted to them was inadequate. The War Office ordered that both formations would only receive equipment once the first line had departed overseas. Though it was decided to equip the third line with a small selection of service rifles for training in April 1915, the War Office declared that there were no machine guns or specialist equipment available for training purposes.⁴⁶⁴ The second line, no longer responsible for drafting but needed for home defence, received outdated 0.275" Japanese rifles between March and May 1915. Whilst inadequate, units were clearly happy to proceed with training as most, such as the 2/8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, had waited nine months to receive their first rifle.⁴⁶⁵ The creation of the Second Reserve and Local Reserve added strain onto the limited supply of equipment and led to excessive delays. The 17th (Reserve) Rifle Brigade, formed in November 1915, had no equipment until the summer of 1916 and, as the CO summarised, 'we drilled and marched and loafed about the Regent Park for weeks without arms, and without anybody taking any interest in us'.⁴⁶⁶

The lack of training infrastructure exacerbated this. Due to pre-war planning, the SR and ER had access to training infrastructure at their war stations, which included marching grounds and rifle ranges. However, all other training grounds were given to first Line Territorial divisions and the New Armies, as they required immediate training for service abroad. Consequently, the remainder of the reserve system had limited access to basic training facilities and could not conduct any advance training or musketry practice until frontline formations were deployed. This was a significant problem, as regular and Territorial reserve units became liable for drafting once these departed overseas. For example, the 10th (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment had only conducted elementary training until May

⁴⁶³ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on 2nd Thames and Medway Reserve Brigade, 9th June 1916; Atkinson, *The Royal Hampshire Regiment*, p. 44.

⁴⁶⁴ TNA, WO293/2, ACI 223, 23rd March 1915 and ACI 195, 22nd April 1915.

⁴⁶⁵ TNA, WO95/5459, 2/8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders war diary, 17th and 29th April and 25th May 1915.

⁴⁶⁶ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on 26th Reserve Brigade, 20th June 1916.

1915, as it had only gained access to service rifles and a rifle range in March and May, respectively. Yet, with news that the 7th, 8th and 9th North Staffordshire Regiment were to be deployed imminently, instructors were forced to create and rush recruits through a diluted training course. Instructors admitted to breaking basic musketry regulations in order to increase the speed of training and stated they had, at best, achieved 'indifferent results'.⁴⁶⁷

Despite the growth in training facilities throughout 1915, reserve units still struggled to access them until the summer of 1916. The London Reserve Brigade, stationed at Richmond Park camp in South-West London, did not have regular access to a rifle range and had to travel across London to Purfleet, Essex or Rainham, Kent to conduct musketry practice. Due to demand and travel limitations, training was often condensed into one course that required recruits to complete their musketry training in one day. Egerton had great sympathy for reserve battalions and clearly outlined to GHQ Home Forces that this, including some minor factors, had caused the large and growing number of untrained recruits with over 12 weeks service in the reserve system.⁴⁶⁸

This situation became increasingly fraught as the range of weaponry increased. The Director of Military Training, Major-General Frederick Health-Caldwell, noted the difficulty of supplying specialised and modern equipment, such as grenades and machine guns, to the reserve in July 1915. It was common therefore for recruits to be trained with replicas or dummy material and difficulties continued into 1916. Recruits in the 3/4th Northamptonshire Regiment only had access to 15 dummy grenades, whilst the shortage of Lewis guns had become so acute the War Office recommended the use of Maxim and Vickers machine guns for light machine gun training. Others, such as the 2/5th Royal Sussex Regiment, were less fortunate and undertook training without a real or dummy machine gun.⁴⁶⁹

This crisis did lead to alterations that improved the access and distribution of specialist equipment. The first adaption simply pooled specialised equipment, such as gas masks, grenades, Lewis guns and signalling apparatuses within reserve brigades, which allowed a

⁴⁶⁷ TNA, WO95/5460, 10th (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment regimental digest.

⁴⁶⁸ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on number of recruits over three months service, 15th May 1916 and Infantry Reserve Brigade, London District, 26th May 1916; TNA, WO293/3, ACI 135, 13th December 1915.

⁴⁶⁹ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on East Anglian Reserve Division, 17th-19th May 1916 and 2/5th Royal Sussex Regiment, 15th June 1916; TNA, WO32/11239, Memorandum from the Director of Military Training, Major-General Frederick Health-Caldwell, to Wolfe Murray, 28th July 1915; TNA, WO293/4, ACI 1169, 10th June 1916.

greater volume of recruits to be trained more efficiently. Though effective when actioned, there was a lack of uniformity in training methods, as the size and length of courses differed between reserve brigades. The second reform was the creation of the Machine Gun Corps (MGC) in October 1915. Beforehand, machine guns were dispersed between individual battalions in sections, who had two and, later, four Maxim or Vickers machine guns. As a result, drafts were supplied by individual reserve battalions, which were instructed to have 18 to 27 fully trained machine gunners at any one time. Yet, due to the uneven nature of casualties, resources, and artificial drafting barriers, Health-Caldwell suggested a centralised body that pooled recruits and resources to maximise the output of reinforcements. Despite resistance from the Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Henry Sclater, the Commander-in-Chief of the BEF, Field Marshal Sir John French, supported the Health-Caldwell's concept of creating a separate MGC, as he wished to expand the machine gun sections under his command. This decision led to the Machine Gun Training School at Grantham and specialist NCOs and officers were transferred across in November 1915. Collectively, they provided specialised training to recruits, after they had completed eight weeks of basic training in reserve battalions. This created some tension, as COs saw this as a drain on their own resources. Despite orders to transfer across intelligent recruits, reports of non-compliance were widespread throughout 1916. The MGC complained about the 'dregs' they received and claimed that COs saw this as an opportunity to rid themselves of undesirable men. Although regimental rivalry influenced this, there was an element of truth to it, as 8.9 percent of recruits were rejected as medically unfit. Nevertheless, Grantham drafted over 15,000 soldiers between January and June 1916 and, despite the difficulties experienced, should be seen as one of the few innovative successes made within the reserve system.⁴⁷⁰

A stable core of officer and NCO Instructors, under the supervision of a competent CO, was also critical, as they were responsible for both the quality and speed of training. Yet, several factors undermined this until late 1916. Firstly, the War Office refused to exempt any fit man from active service, which made all instructors liable for drafting. Initially, it was envisaged that instructors would be permanently allocated to training duties, as this would create the most economic and efficient training practices.⁴⁷¹ As Peter Simkins and Keith

⁴⁷⁰ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on brigade training, June-September 1916 and Grantham Machine Gun Training School, 4th-5th July 1916; WO32/11239, Reports on the Machine Gun Corps, May-November 1915.

⁴⁷¹ Hansard, HC, 10th June 1907, Vol. 175, cc. 1147-1148.

Simpson have demonstrated however, the rapid expansion of the armed forces caused an urgent demand for officers and NCOs. This created over 30,000 vacancies for the New Armies alone and, due to the volume of officer casualties overseas, officer reinforcements were urgent.⁴⁷² Although 500 Indian Army officers on home leave were allocated to the New Armies, as well as many junior officers who were commissioned from the OTC, many were withdrawn from the SR to facilitate this. A similar practice occurred with NCOs and units such as the 3rd Connaught Rangers were bled of experienced personnel. In September 1914, the TF lost their pre-war instructors to the New Armies and, in April 1915, had to transfer all home service NCO and officer instructors to Provisional Brigades.⁴⁷³ As a result, most reserve battalions were left with inexperienced junior officers and NCOs who had little knowledge of how to instruct recruits.

To remedy this, Home Commands created 'schools of instruction' to provide specialist training for NCOs and subalterns at the beginning of 1915. This was supported by reserve brigades, who independently created their own system of training schools to supplement their education.⁴⁷⁴ Both were popular, as the School of Musketry in Eastern Command had trained 1,387 officers and 1,783 NCOs in musketry between July 1915 and July 1916.⁴⁷⁵ However, attempts to rebuild a specialist instructors corps were inefficient as the War Office continually drafted them. For example, Second Lieutenant W. A. Buchanan, 3rd Connaught Rangers, was drafted overseas within four weeks of becoming a 1st class musketry instructor in January 1915. This forced reserve battalions to continuously send officers and NCOs on courses to preserve specialist knowledge at the regimental level, which was undermined by the common practice of withdrawing them, as well as school instructors, from lessons for drafting.⁴⁷⁶ The War Office proposed to offset this by using convalescents as instructors, who could disseminate current practice on the Western Front. Though seen as useful and

⁴⁷² TNA, WO95/25, Adjutant General war diary, 26th December 1914; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 212-218; Simpson, Keith, 'The Officers', in Beckett, Ian F. W. and Simpson, Keith (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 70-72.

⁴⁷³ TNA, WO95/5463, '2nd training report' [ND] c. July or August 1915; TNA, WO293/1, ACI 30, 2nd September 1914; TNA, WO293/3, ACI 236, 20th August 1915.

⁴⁷⁴ TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office.

⁴⁷⁵ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on Eastern Command School of Musketry, 11th August 1916.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid, Report by Egerton on School of Instruction for NCOs, Southern Command, 16th September 1916; TNA, WO79/40, 3rd Connaught Rangers service digest, January-February 1915.

insightful, most men could not carry out these duties as they were either permanently unfit or undergoing a process of rehabilitation.⁴⁷⁷

The ability of these courses to create qualified instructors is questionable however, as the laissez-faire regimental organisation gave schools of instruction complete freedom to choose their own curriculum. In turn, an NCO or officer who had passed a course could disseminate this knowledge through his own training methods. For example, the Headquarters of Gymnasium training at Aldershot were criticised for their instruction, as a number of recently qualified instructors were operating completely different training programmes across the reserve system.⁴⁷⁸ Many schools were also criticised for the practice of 'robbing' reserve units of trainee instructors. Many were given dispensation to maintain a number of the best instructors from each course to fill spaces on their establishment. The Eastern Command School of Musketry, for example, had 28 officers attached from different regiments and were allowed to retain them for a minimum of six months. Though this ensured the best instructors were available for educational purposes, reserve units were frustrated at losing some of their best NCOs and officers without replacement.⁴⁷⁹ Their impact, though positive, was marred by the lack of uniformity in training and the constant drain on instructors through drafting and secondment.

Due to the decentralised nature of the reserve system and the large body of inexperienced instructors, competent COs were vital. Though the regular and Territorial reserve system were grouped into brigades and, sometimes for the latter, divisions, the battalion CO was solely responsible for the speed and quality of training provided. A number of battalions were fortunate in having competent COs who were vigorous trainers and excellent administrators. CO 9th (Reserve) Royal West Kent Regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel O. J. Daniell, was considered an energetic and capable commander, whilst his second-in-command, Major T. T. Burt, was earmarked for promotion.⁴⁸⁰ Yet, GHQ and the War Office

⁴⁷⁷ TNA, WO95/5460, 10th (Reserve) North Staffordshire Regiment regimental digest; Atkinson, *The Royal Hampshire Regiment*, p. 45.

⁴⁷⁸ Bowman and Connelly, *The Edwardian Army*, pp. 69-70; IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on 3rd Thames and Medway SR Brigade, 7th June 1916 and Aldershot Gymnasium headquarters, June 1916.

⁴⁷⁹ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on Eastern Command School of Musketry, 11th August 1916; TNA, WO95/5463, 2/5th Royal East Kent Regiment war diary, unlabelled report, [ND] c. August 1915.

⁴⁸⁰ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on 5th Reserve Infantry Brigade, 9th-10th May 1916; *Army List*, May 1916, c. 1356b.

increasingly saw the reserve system as a refuge for senior officers deemed ineffective or medically unfit for active duties. The rapid expansion of the armed forces had forced the War Office to fill senior command positions at home and overseas with retired officers or regular officers who had limited experience. A large proportion of the latter, who were chosen to command service battalions, could not withstand the pressure of active service. As Mark Connelly notes, the poor performance of New Army divisions at the Battle of Loos in September 1915 had led to many COs being replaced, including those of the 6th, 7th and 8th Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment). To avoid dismissal however, the War Office would 'Stellenbosch' officers into the reserve.⁴⁸¹ For example, Lieutenant-Colonel H. R. Fletcher, a senior captain in the 1/4th Norfolk Regiment in August 1914, was transferred to England in September 1915 after one month of active service in Gallipoli. Fletcher was subsequently appointed to command the 3/4th Norfolk Regiment in April 1916 and refraining from direct criticism, the Inspector-General of the Infantry, Major-General G. A. A. Egerton, implied his and other 'promotions' were due to the Territorial reserve becoming a refuge for officers 'not up to the mark'. Overall, an estimated 57 TF Majors and Captains on active command were promoted to command third line battalions and, according to Peter Hodgkinson, represented 30 percent of all appointments. Rather than a system of meritocracy, appointments were part of a wider trend of pigeon-holing officers who proved unsuitable for active service.⁴⁸²

Many COs were convalescents who were medically unfit to organise and train recruits. CO and second-in-command of the 19th (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps, Lieutenant-Colonel R. D. Keyworth and Major J. H. Henderson respectively, both suffered from chronic medical conditions. The former had a recurring leg injury, whilst the latter had been hospitalised several times due to a head wound received in France. This resulted in a lack of supervision and left only 19 officers to organise and train 2,600 men, split between different garrisons and camps. This inevitably affected the quality and speed of training and led Egerton to

⁴⁸¹ Connelly, Mark, *Steady the Buffs! A Regiment, a Region, and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 70 and 76; Travers, 'The Hidden Army', p. 533.

⁴⁸² IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on East Anglian Reserve Division, 17th-19th May 1916; *Army List*, July 1915, c. 989 and May 1916, c. 988b; Hodgkinson, Peter Eric, 'British Infantry Battalion Commanders in the First World War' (University of Birmingham PhD Thesis, 2013), pp. 379-384.

recommend the removal of Major Henderson. GHQ Home Forces disagreed and retained his services.⁴⁸³

These challenges were applicable to retired officers who were selected to become COs. Colonel Sir Thomas Edward Milbourne-Swinnterton-Pilkington, a former regular who was CO 14th (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps, was deemed unsuited to lead a reserve battalion. Despite Egerton's strongly worded missive that recommended Milbourne-Swinnterton-Pilkington's dismissal, he remained. Though the War Office may have been reluctant to embarrass officers who had returned in a national crisis, many were simply too difficult to remove due to their influence across army and society. Milbourne-Swinnterton-Pilkington, an influential and prominent baronet in Yorkshire, was commissioned into the 60th Regiment (King's Royal Rifle Corps) in 1879 and had held a number of senior roles within the regiment. He was the CO 6th King's Royal Rifle Corps between 1903 and 1908 and had been made the regiment's honorary colonel in 1904. The CO 3/4th Suffolk Regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel Guy Lenox Bence-Lambert, was roundly criticised for lacking the vigour and the expertise needed to train drafts. Yet, he had been the CO 3rd Connaught Rangers between 1897 and 1905 and, since retiring his commission, had become a 'country man of considerable influence' in Suffolk. He had been elected to the East Suffolk County Council in 1907 and remained as Councillor for Wangford until 1914. Appointed Commandant of the Suffolk Volunteer Training Corps in early 1915, he became the CO 3/4th Suffolk Regiment in April 1915 and played a significant role in recruiting the battalion. The CO 3/14th London Regiment (London Scottish), Colonel J. W. Greig, was reported as old and 'not particularly up to date'. Yet, he had commanded the 14th London Regiment (London Scottish) from 1904 to 1911 and was an elected Liberal MP between 1910 and 1922. Though Egerton's criticisms against Territorial commanders must be taken with caution, as he may have been prejudiced due to his position as a regular officer, he demonstrates how many senior commanders lacked the administrative and training skills needed for their position. This compromised the only form of quality control and, considering the hastily trained and unstable cohort of instructors, criticisms about the poor training of drafts were probably deserved.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸³ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on 26th Reserve Infantry Brigade, 26th August 1916; *Army List*, May 1916, c. 1392g.

⁴⁸⁴ *Bury Free Press*, 12th June 1915; *Diss Express*, and *Norfolk and Suffolk Journal*, 23rd January 1914; *East Anglian Daily Times*, 4th March 1907; *Framlingham Weekly News*, 22nd May and 17th July 1915; *The Scotsman*,

Thus, by summer of 1916, the reserve system had become increasingly chaotic as *ad hoc* alterations were implemented. Although Kitchener is rightly recognised for being the architect of Britain's 'first citizen army', the reserve system he moulded was incapable of supporting it.⁴⁸⁵ This became evident once the Battle of the Somme was launched in July 1916. In the first month alone, the BEF suffered 7,835 officer and 155,767 other rank casualties, which included normal sick wastage on other parts of the line.⁴⁸⁶ This created great strain on the reserve system and, for the War Office to fulfil manpower requests, it was forced to transfer personnel between regiments.⁴⁸⁷ This did not go unnoticed and frontline commanders, such as the GOC Fourth Army, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Rawlinson, began to question reinforcement practices in August.⁴⁸⁸ Lieutenant-General Sir Nevil Macready, Adjutant General at the War Office from February 1916, retrospectively justified these actions in his memoir, claiming, 'in a war in which the whole nation is engaged *esprit de corps* must be for the army as a whole and for the nation, rather than for smaller units'.⁴⁸⁹

Though the regimental system did not collapse in 1916 as claimed by Hew Strachan, it did prompt the War Office to remodel the reserve system.⁴⁹⁰ Introduced in September 1916, the TR was created to 'facilitate the provision of infantry drafts' and preserve regimental integrity as far as possible. The primary regimental reserves, the SR, ER and Territorial third line, continued their role of absorbing and training drafts for their respective regiments. Minor controversy was caused by the decision to amalgamate 194 Territorial reserve battalions into 87 units across 14 reserve brigades, as it was seen to destroy the final remnants of the Territorial *esprit de corps*. These changes were limited when compared to the regular reserve, which disbanded 33 Second and Local Reserve battalion and utilised the remaining 112 to form the TR, which was a generic manpower reserve that provided drafts to all regiments. Though excess personnel were initially used to refill regimental reserves, the

13th June 1934; *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 18th February 1944; IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on East Anglian Reserve Division, 4th Infantry Reserve Brigade and London Infantry Brigade Reserve, 17th-19th, 23rd-24th and 26th May 1916; *Army List*, May 1916, c. 1016a, 1392 and 1590a; *Hart's Army List*, 1880, p. 309, 1901, p. 885, 1906, p. 975, 1909, p. 1015 and 1134, 1910, p. 797, 1911, p. 543 and 797, and 1912, p. 527.

⁴⁸⁵ Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, pp. 321-326.

⁴⁸⁶ Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 120-121.

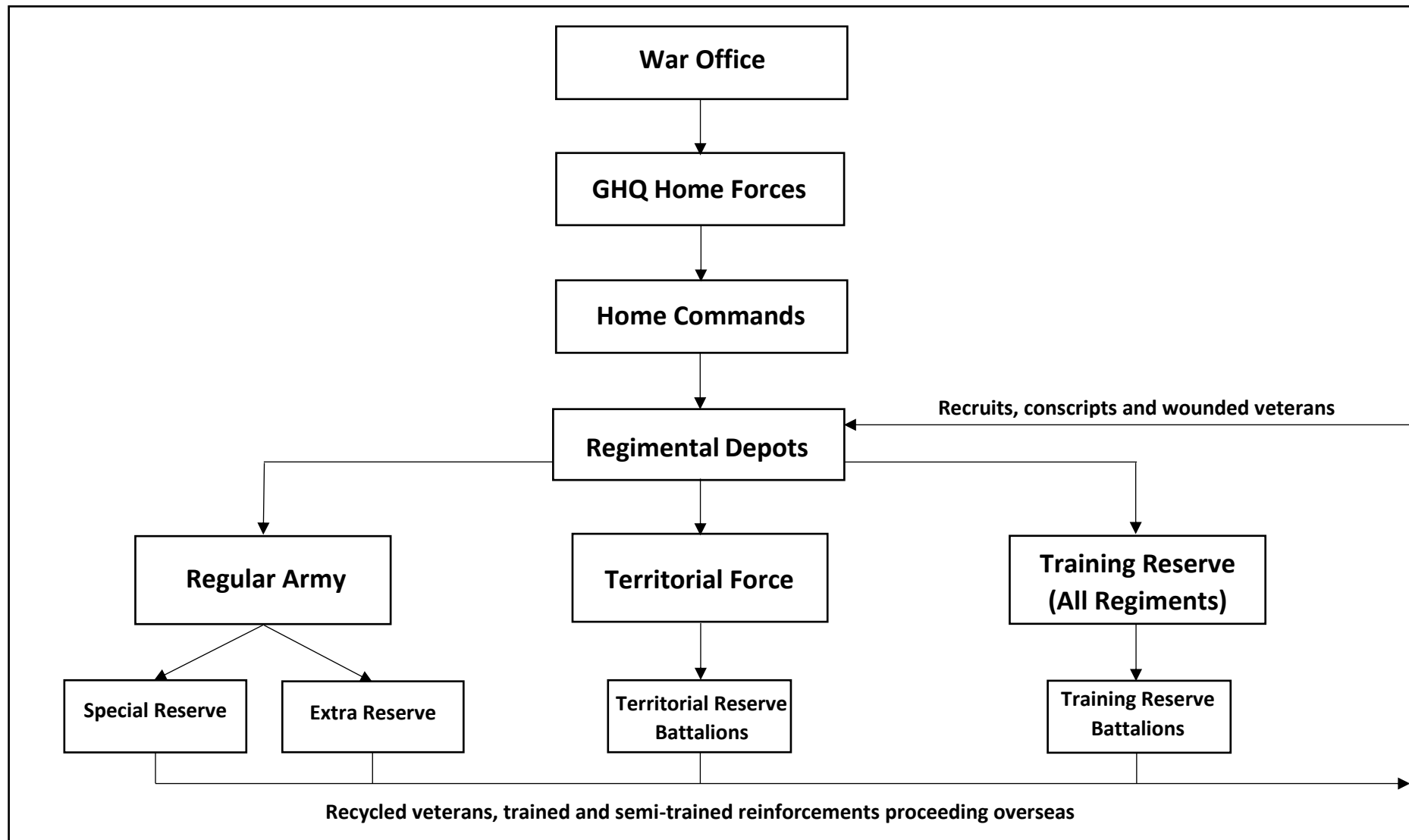
⁴⁸⁷ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on reserve formations, July-September 1916; TNA, WO114/29, Regular army return, 26th June 1916.

⁴⁸⁸ TNA, WO95/441, Fourth Army AQMG war diary, 8th August 1916.

⁴⁸⁹ Macready, Nevil, *Annals of an Active Life, Vol. I* (London: Hutchinson, 1924), pp. 256-257.

⁴⁹⁰ Strachan, Hew, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 207-209.

Figure 2.2: Reinforcement System in the United Kingdom, September 1916



War Office altered the allocation of conscripts to preserve regimental identity. Similar to the distribution methods of 1915, conscripts from each recruitment area were used to fill up corresponding regimental reserves. Surplus recruits in each recruitment area were used to fill up regiments from the same Home Command and, only once that had been achieved, were men posted to the TR.⁴⁹¹

Irish regiments were excluded from these reforms and the War Office retained the six Local Reserve battalions that had been created to support the 36th (Ulster) Division.⁴⁹² Conscription had not been extended to Ireland and, with only an estimated 12,000 men enlisting for service from January to July 1916, it was impossible to maintain the national identity of units. By September, Irish Divisions were 17,194 men below establishment, with the 16th (Irish) Division at little more than brigade strength. Political factors influenced this, however, as both the leaders of the Irish Unionists and Irish Parliamentary Party, Sir Edward Carson and John Redmond respectively, were unwilling to accept the Army Council's decision to amalgamate both divisions. Without the political will to restructure Irish forces overseas, a similar process at home was impossible. Therefore, the Army Council was forced to decree that all Irish reinforcements would be sent to the SR and ER, whilst English recruits would be used to rebuild Irish service battalions. This was disastrous for the identity of some battalions, such as the 9th Royal Irish Rifles, who lost their West Belfast character through English drafts. Though Richard Grayson claims Irish Regiments faced the same difficulties as their British counterparts, Irish regiments were isolated from structural reform due to the unique political situation of Ireland.⁴⁹³

Hine claims these reforms were introduced to reflect those made to the organisation of Infantry Base Depots (IBD) on the Western Front. Though this will be explored in chapter four, GHQ changed the organisation of IBDs from divisions to regiments on 1st July 1916. This enabled drafts to be grouped into larger reinforcements pools that could be directed to any battalion of the regiment, based upon the broader situation on the Western Front. This did

⁴⁹¹ TNA WO293/5, ACI 1528, 6th August 1916; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 142.

⁴⁹² TNA, WO114/30, Regular army return, 4th September 1916.

⁴⁹³ Bowman, Timothy, *Irish Regiments in the Great War: Discipline and Morale* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 141-142; Bowman, Butler and Wheatley, *The Disparity of Sacrifice*, p. 266; Grayson, Richard, *Belfast Boys: How Unionists and Nationalists Fought and Died Together in the First World War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), pp. 102-103; Perry, Nicholas, 'Nationality in the Irish Infantry Regiments in the First World War', *War and Society*, 12:1 (1994), pp. 65-95.

not require any change to reinforcement structure in the UK however, as the method of drafting had not altered.⁴⁹⁴ Reinforcements were still requested by 3rd Echelon for individual battalions and, as Second Lieutenant Frank Warren, King's Royal Rifle Corps, mentioned in October 1916, 'you will see I am posted to the 20th (Pioneers), though it does not always follow that one goes to the battalion named for you first.'⁴⁹⁵ The TR was therefore designed to resolve ongoing issues in the UK, not the Western Front.

These reforms improved the structure, command, and training practices of the reserve system. Firstly, the amalgamation of the Second Reserve and Local Reserve, as well as the Territorial second and third line, removed the last vestiges of compartmentalisation. Secondly, the TR gave regiments, such as those who rapidly expanded on drew on small rural populations, unrestricted access to manpower. Though the supply of recruits was dependent upon the overall manpower situation, the War Office were no longer constrained by artificial barriers. Thirdly, inefficient commanders were weeded out and both equipment and instructors were concentrated within the reserve system. Seven battalions in the Third Line Home Counties Division were amalgamated into the 4th (Reserve) Royal Sussex Regiment and 7th (Reserve) Middlesex Regiment, whilst their COs, Lieutenant-Colonels B. T. Hodson and J. S. Drew respectively, were retained due to their merit. Though Drew was junior and had only been appointed before the restructuring, he had recent combat experience in Egypt and France. Each battalion had greater access to equipment and the best instructors were selected to implement a cohesive training programme. For instance, Captain Lewellyn Davies was attached to the third line Home Counties Division as a musketry instructor and was noted for his excellent instruction.⁴⁹⁶

The War Office also transferred a large quantity of men from newly created TR battalions to regimental reserves. Although this was done to maintain regimental integrity, many SR and ER units were, once again, rapidly inundated with the new intake. The strength of the Dover SR Brigade had increased from 8,100 to 12,500 men in September, which left

⁴⁹⁴ TNA WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 12th May 1916; TNA, WO95/3969, Letter from Deputy Adjutant General, Major-General Sir Edward Graham, to Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General G. H. Fowke, 10th June 1916; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Army*, pp. 110-113 and 142.

⁴⁹⁵ HRO, TRGJRA, 170A12W-D-4546/14, Letter from Second Lieutenant Frank Warren to 'Bun', 30th October 1916.

⁴⁹⁶ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on third line Home Counties Division, 14th September 1916; *Army List*, September 1916, c. 1228b.

them in a state of flux. Conversely, the newly formed 7th TR Brigade, who had transferred many to the Dover SR Brigade, were understrength and unable to utilise the instructors and equipment at their disposal. Major-General G. A. A. Egerton regretted this and wished the 31st TR Battalion were '10 times stronger'. Though the War Office could have paid better attention to the redistribution of recruits to ensure a smoother transition, 'the wisdom of this new departure is amply justified – there is obviously a very great advantage in securing the best senior officers and pooling all the instructors'.⁴⁹⁷

Despite the success and importance of these reforms, the historiography has focused on whether these changes undermined regimental integrity and the local identity of units. Though regimental reserves were preserved as the primary reinforcement mechanism, some, such as J. G. Fuller and Clive Hughes, have argued that the TR nationalised the army by creating a generic manpower pool. Others, including David French, claim extensive casualties led to the TR, which was designed to cut ties between a regiment and the local population.⁴⁹⁸ Most analyses have focused upon anecdotal evidence or assessed the changing socio-economic composition of New Army and Territorial battalions throughout the war. The latter method often ignores regular units and uses the changing number of men residing outside the regimental recruitment area as an index to determine the breakdown in regimental integrity. For example, Ian Beckett's and James Kitchen's analysis of various Territorial battalions and the 54th (East Anglian) Division have demonstrated a steep decline in local identity from 1916 and 1917, respectively.⁴⁹⁹ These assessments do not, however, fully assess the range of reasons that led to change in regimental cohesion and, as a result, claim it was a combination of battlefield casualties and broader manpower. Yet, Helen McCartney's research on the King's (Liverpool Regiment) expands upon this, and demonstrates how reinforcement policy attempted to preserve the regimental system by shifting its local identity onto regional affiliation.⁵⁰⁰ Hine also claimed this in regard to the English-Welsh

⁴⁹⁷ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on third line Home Counties Division, Dover SR Brigade and 7th TR Brigade, 14th, 25th and 26th September 1916.

⁴⁹⁸ French, *Military Identities*, pp. 277-278; Fuller, J. G., *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1991), pp. 43-44; Hughes, Clive, 'The New Armies', in Ian F. W. Beckett and Keith Simson (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A social study of the British army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 114; McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, p. 58.

⁴⁹⁹ Beckett, 'The Territorial Force', pp. 146-151; Kitchen, *The British Imperial Army in the Middle East*, pp. 135-138.

⁵⁰⁰ McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, pp. 58-74.

Marches regiments. Yet, she failed to link this to broader changes in reinforcement policy and her analysis was, at times, statistically unviable.⁵⁰¹

Therefore, to fully assess the impact of reinforcement policy and the TR on regimental integrity, it is critical to analyse the socio-economic composition of reinforcements for each battalion across multiple regiments in relation to reinforcement policy. Table 2.7 records the deterioration of regimental identity in the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment), 1st Somerset Light Infantry, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers and 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion between 1914 and 1918. Unlike previous research, this analysis will use the surviving battalion casualty books, rather than the *Soldiers Died in the Great War* dataset, as the basis of this investigation. All research to date has utilised the latter, as it provides basic information on every soldier who died in the army. Casualty books, however, are a detailed source which are vital for reconstructing the movement of reinforcements to and from battalions on active service. It records the movement and service details of all men earmarked for, and received by, the battalion on the Western and Italian Fronts, until posted or transferred elsewhere. They underpin any assessment of the reserve system and, despite limitations, provide a more nuanced interpretation of regiment identity.

Though the selection of units is unbalanced, as it does not assess New Army battalions or Scottish and Irish Regiments, it was determined by which casualty books have been discovered to date. These sources do, however, remove the reliance upon the *Soldiers Died in the Great War* dataset, as it was not used to determine which soldiers were selected. Rather, reinforcements with last names ending from A to G in each casualty book were selected, which equated to roughly one third of all soldiers received by each battalion. This increased the range of men assessed, as it included those that were discharged or continued their military service elsewhere. Figures for the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers and 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion in 1918 did not reach the 10 percent threshold needed for statistical viability and have therefore been excluded. Though this was due to a lack of supporting archival evidence, both units were transferred to the Italian Front in November

⁵⁰¹ Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 53-56, 79-84, 135-141, 205-210, 286-291 and 298-299.

1917. Both would have experienced a relatively small turnover in manpower and, as a result, would not have provided an accurate snapshot of the situation on the Western Front.⁵⁰²

This methodology has led to two substantial differences. Firstly, reinforcements for each battalion, rather than the unit itself, forms the focus of this analysis. Though the composition of the unit is initially included and assessed during the year it was deployed to provide a robust benchmark to measure change against, this methodology has created a real-time overview of regimental integrity. By assessing the socio-economic profile of reinforcements upon their arrival at battalions, rather than the date of death of a serving soldier, it is possible to assess the impact of reinforcement policy on the composition of units. Secondly, the residency recorded in *Soldiers Died in the Great War* has been avoided where possible, as it only records where each man enlisted. Though the Army defined this as a recruit's residence, local connections with regiments during the Late Victorian and Edwardian periods were weak across several parts of the country, and it was common for men to travel to different parts of the UK to enlist. Yet, due to the number of soldiers assessed, it was possible to only input places of residency that were verified through other sources.⁵⁰³

Overall, the social composition of battalions in table 2.7 fits the broad pattern of decline within the broader historiography. It does not, however, support the argument that the regimental system collapsed or became 'nationalised' in 1916. For some units, such as the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion, it is clear the reserve system could not maintain its local identity. Whilst 86.8 percent of original members and reinforcements were born or resident in Buckinghamshire in 1915, only 42.6 percent of replacements had a link with the county in 1916.⁵⁰⁴ Yet, this was not the case for the other three battalions. In 1914, 57.9 percent of men that landed with, or were received by, the 1st Somerset Light Infantry, were born or resident in Somerset. Whilst dropping to 50 percent in 1915, it increased and stabilised near the pre-war figure at 56.9 the following year. This experience was akin to the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment), which saw a small rise from 90.1 to 92.5 percent of reinforcements that were born or resident in Liverpool and its adjacent regions in 1915 and 1916, respectively.

⁵⁰² For further information on the methodology and sample, see appendix 1.

⁵⁰³ French, *Military Identities*, pp. 44-50; Spiers, Edward M., *The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 126-127.

⁵⁰⁴ All statistics regarding regimental integrity, unless specified, are drawn from the same dataset and sources noted in tables 2.7-2.9.

Table 2.7: Percentage of original personnel and subsequent reinforcements received in four battalions, born or resident in the regimental recruitment area, 1914-1918.⁵⁰⁵

Battalions	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
1 st Somerset Light Infantry	57.9	50	56.9	34.3	18
1 st Royal Welsh Fusiliers	16.7	19.3	31.4	11.6	
1/6 th King's (Liverpool Regiment)		90.1	92.5	38.3	27.1
1/1 st Buckinghamshire Battalion		86.8	42.6	8.2	

In contrast, the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers saw a growth in local identity from 1914 to 1916. Overall, only 16.7 percent of men in 1914 came from the regimental recruiting area in North Wales. Most had been born or resident in English cities, with 9.1 and 16.3 percent of men having a connection with London and Birmingham respectively, whilst the mining communities of South Wales also provided a sizable number of recruits. Though odd, considering the skilled nature of many mining occupations, this was likely caused by the economic turmoil and extensive strike actions that took place in collieries across South Wales between 1910 and 1912.⁵⁰⁶ By 1915, 19.3 percent of reinforcements came from the regimental recruiting area and, in the following year, increased to 31.4. Whilst low in comparison to other battalions, this sustained increase stands in direct contradiction to previous claims regarding regimental integrity.

Arguably, battlefield casualties and general wastage are an important factor determining the number of reinforcements needed by an individual unit. Though the 1/6th

⁵⁰⁵ Buckinghamshire Archives (BA), TA/6/11-14, 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion casualty books, Vol. I-IV, 1915-1918; Find My Past (FMP), 1891 Census for England, Scotland and Wales; FMP, 1901 Census for England, Scotland and Wales; FMP, 1911 Census for England and Wales; FMP, 1911 Census for Ireland; FMP, *British Jewry Book of Honour, 1914-1920*; FMP, *De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour, 1914-1918*; FMP, *Deserters and Absentees in the Police Gazette, 1914-1919*; FMP, *Liverpool Pals, 1914-1918*; FMP, *Prisoners of War, 1715-1945*; FMP, *Railwaymen Died in the Great War, 1914-1918*; FMP, *Royal Artillery Attestations 1883-1942*; FMP, *Royal Tank Corps Enlistment Records, 1919-1934*; FMP, *Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919*; Liverpool Maritime Museum (LMM), King's Regiment Collection (KRC), K2/1, 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) casualty book, Vol. I-III, 1915-1918; Somerset Archive (SA), Regimental Archive of the Somerset Light Infantry (RASLI), DD/SLI/9/4, 1st Somerset Light Infantry casualty book, 1914-1918; TNA, AIR79, Airmen's Records, 1901-1944; TNA, PIN82, Widows' pension forms, 1910-1932; TNA, WO96, Militia attestation forms, 1806-1915; TNA, WO161, Prisoners of war interviews; TNA, WO363, Soldier's service files; TNA, WO364, Soldier's pension claims, 1900-1994; The Royal Welsh Fusiliers Museum (TRWFM), 276, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers casualty books, Vol. I and II, 1914-1918.

⁵⁰⁶ Arnot, Robert Page, *The Miners: Years of Struggle: A History of the Miner's Federation of Great Britain (From 1910 Onwards)* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1952), pp. 57-122.

(King's) Liverpool Regiment suffered sizable losses during the third assault on Guillemont and the Battle of Morval in August and September 1916 respectively, the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion lost 242 men near Ovillers between 21st and 24th July and, by late August, had suffered 582 casualties. Whilst the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion had avoided great losses in 1915, as it had been stationed on a quiet part of the line during the previous 12 months, 47 Territorials had, during that time, chosen to take their discharge at the end of their service period. This was substantially higher than the 23 discharges recorded by the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) and, considering these figures are based on a one third sample, it is clear many more chose to leave the battalion at a pivotal moment.⁵⁰⁷ Though this drained experienced personnel and reinforcements in the reserve, it does not explain all the differences noted. For instance, both regular units suffered heavily, as they were relied upon extensively during the Somme Campaign. The 1st Somerset Light Infantry lost 34 officers and 536 other ranks by early August, whilst the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers suffered 238 casualties alone during the opening stages of the Battle of Guillemont on 3rd September 1916.⁵⁰⁸ Yet, rather than witness a decline, as expected, regimental integrity remained stable.

Several factors need to be considered to explain this. Firstly, broader manpower policies, including the introduction of conscription, enabled the army to tap into a much larger manpower pool in 1916, which temporarily offset these losses. Although the limitations of conscription have been analysed throughout this chapter, it did enable some regiments to tap into regional sources that had been unwilling to enlist under the voluntary model. For instance, the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers recruited in the six northern Welsh counties of Anglesey, Caernarvonshire, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Merionethshire, and Montgomeryshire. As table 2.7 demonstrates, local recruitment within these counties was exceptionally low until 1914, with 77.1 percent of those enlisting in the regimental recruitment area having connections to the anglicised border counties of Denbighshire and Flintshire.

In part, this was due to the rise of nonconformists in Wales from the 19th century, which saw, after the Welsh Revival of 1905-1906, an estimated 38.4 percent of the Welsh

⁵⁰⁷ BA, TA/6/11-14, 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion casualty books, Vol. I-IV, 1915-1918; LMM, KRC, KR/2/1-3, King's (Liverpool Regiment) casualty books, Vol. I-III, 1915-1918; TNA, WO95/2763, 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion war diary, July-August 1916; TNA, WO95/2926, 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) war diary, January-September 1916; Beckett, *The Territorial Force*, p. 150.

⁵⁰⁸ TNA, WO95/1499, 1st Somerset Light Infantry war diary, July-August 1916; TNA, WO95/1665, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers war diary, July-September 1916.

population as members of one of the four main denominations. Whilst the practice of pacifism in certain communions may have deterred some from enlisting, the army's attitude to religion may have influenced this.⁵⁰⁹ They had not acknowledged any nonconformist denomination until the 1860s, when Wesleyans were recognised. Baptists and Congregationalist were not accepted until 1903 and, collectively, this deterred men from enlisting, as only seven percent of recruits were registered nonconformist by 1913.⁵¹⁰

Yet, the Welsh revival strongly resonated and flourished in Welsh-speaking communities, which disproportionately affected the recruitment district for the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.⁵¹¹ Anglesey, Caernarvonshire and Merionethshire were amongst the top five counties of Wales with the highest proportion of Welsh-speaking communities, with an estimated 88.7, 85.6 and 90.3 percent of their population speaking Welsh in 1911.⁵¹² Despite H. J. Hanham's argument that the emergence of quasi-military bodies during this period in England, such as the Boys Brigade, demonstrated to young nonconformists, 'the idea that the army stood for a system of values that transcended the men who composed it', it had little effect on those in Welsh-speaking communities.⁵¹³

Even with the outbreak of war in 1914 and the broad support of nonconformist religious leaders, recruitment flagged in Welsh-speaking communities. As Catriona Pennell argued, English-speaking Welshman, whose culture and speech were Anglicised, were more likely to identify and support with the British war effort. This is clear in Denbighshire and Flintshire, whose population predominantly spoke English and had close connections with the counties of Cheshire and Shropshire. Despite attempts to meet the linguistic and religious needs of Welshmen through the publication of recruitment literature and propaganda in Welsh, as well as the creation of the 38th (Welsh) Division itself, poor administrative machinery, economic factors, rural detachment, and an overall lack of cultural affinity to England undermined this.⁵¹⁴ Akin to the experience of French Canadians in Canada, many

⁵⁰⁹ Watts, Michael R., *The Dissenters, Vol. III: The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 120-124, 225 and 366-367.

⁵¹⁰ Spiers, Edward M., *The Army and Society, 1815-1914* (London: Longman, 1980), pp. 49-51.

⁵¹¹ Watts, *The Dissenters*, p. 226.

⁵¹² 1918 (Cd. 8491), *Census of England and Wales 1911: General Report with Appendices*, pp. 248-253.

⁵¹³ Hanham, H. J., 'Religion and Nationality in the Mid-Victorian Army', in Foot, M. R. D. (ed.), *War and Society: Historical Essays in Honour of J.R. Western* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973), p. 173.

⁵¹⁴ Bowman, Butler and Wheatley, *The Disparity of Sacrifice*, pp. 138 and 154; Hughes, 'The New Armies', pp. 114-122; Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, pp. 154-156.

Welsh-speaking communities did not strongly identify with the broader British state, its army and war effort.⁵¹⁵

Yet, through the introduction of conscription, a proportion of this population became liable for service, which saw increases from some of these counties, particularly Caernarvonshire. In 1914, only 1.6 percent of men that arrived with, or received by, the battalion, was born or resident on enlistment in Caernarvonshire. By 1915, after the initial wave of enthusiasm, less than 1 percent of reinforcements had a connection to the county. After conscription, however, this rose to 10.3 percent. Whilst sparsely populated counties such as Anglesey continuously returned low yields, conscription had enabled the army to draw upon some untouched pools of manpower in 1916, which helped to reinforce regimental identity in the face of significant losses.

Conscription also enabled the army to direct the flow of men enlisting outside the regimental area towards their respective regiments. A proportion of recruits for the Royal Welsh Fusiliers had traditionally come from the towns and cities of Warwickshire, estimated at 17.9 and 10.4 percent in 1914 and 1915, respectively. In 1916, however, this dropped to 2.6 percent, as men were automatically conscripted into the county reserves of the Warwickshire Regiment or sent to other regiments of Southern Command. Despite Ilana R. Bet-El's assertion that conscripts had a lack of choice upon enlistment, a recruit could request to join a specific regiment or battalion, providing there was a vacancy.⁵¹⁶ For example, Jacob Fordanski was a native and resident of Birmingham when he was conscripted in March 1916. Originally sent to the 7th (Reserve) Warwickshire Regiment, he requested a transfer to the 3/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion on religious grounds. Jacob was Jewish and knew the latter had received a sizable contingent of Jewish men from London. This was accepted and Jacob was transferred to the 3/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion in June.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁵ Brown, R. Craig and Cook, Ray, *Canada 1896-1921: A nation transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), pp. 252-267; Granatstein, J. L and Hitsman J. M, *Broken Promises: A history of conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977); Morton, Desmond, 'Did the French Canadians cause the Conscription Crisis of 1917?', *Canadian Military History*, 24:1 (2015), pp. 88-99.

⁵¹⁶ Bet-El, Ilana R., 'Experience into Identity: The Writings of British Conscript Soldiers, 1916-1918' (University College London PhD Thesis, 1991), pp. 74-77.

⁵¹⁷ BA, TA/6/11, Entry for Jacob Fordanski in 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion casualty book, Vol. I, p. 99; TNA, WO363, private Jacob Fordanski's service record, <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBM%2FWO363-4%2F7306882%2F30%2F627> [last accessed 11/02/2022]; TNA, WO293/4, ACI 378, 14th February 1916.

Table 2.8: Percentage of original personnel and subsequent reinforcements received in four battalions, born or resident in London, 1914-1918.⁵¹⁸

Battalions	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
1 st Somerset Light Infantry	8.9	11.1	10.8	10	11.2
1 st Royal Welsh Fusiliers	8.9	4.5	15.4	9.9	
1/6 th King's (Liverpool Regiment)		2.1	0	2.2	7.1
1/1 st Buckinghamshire Battalion		1.6	21.3	17.8	

London was excluded from this process and continued its pre-war role as a national recruiting district.⁵¹⁹ Table 2.8 demonstrates that all battalions, excluding the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment), received a sizable flow of men with connections to London from 1916. Overall, an estimated 8.9 percent of men who landed with, or were received by, the 1st Somerset Light Infantry and 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers, had a connection to London. Whilst the 1st Somerset Light Infantry remained steady from 1915 to 1918 and received between 10 and 11.2 percent of reinforcements with connections London, the Royal Welsh Fusiliers witnessed a more sporadic distribution. Dropping to 4.5 percent in 1915, it rose to 15.4 in 1916 and stabilised alongside the 1st Somerset Light Infantry at 9.9 in 1917. Whilst these figures, in many ways, represented a continuation of pre-war recruitment patterns for both battalions, the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion experienced rapid change. Unsurprisingly, due to the broader difficulties of replenishing the unit from regimental reserves, it received the largest proportion of manpower from London, estimated at 21.3 and 17.8 percent in 1916 and 1917,

⁵¹⁸ BA, TA/6/11-14, 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion casualty books, Vol. I-IV, 1915-1918; FMP, 1891 Census for England, Scotland and Wales; FMP, 1901 Census for England, Scotland and Wales; FMP, 1911 Census for England and Wales; FMP, 1911 Census for Ireland; FMP, *British Jewry Book, 1914-1920*; FMP, *De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour, 1914-1918*; FMP, *Deserters and Absentees in the Police Gazette, 1914-1919*; FMP, *Liverpool Pals, 1914-1918*; FMP, *Prisoners of War, 1715-1945*; FMP, *Railwaymen Died in the Great War, 1914-1918*; FMP, *Royal Artillery Attestations 1883-1942*; FMP, *Royal Tank Corps Enlistment Records, 1919-1934*; FMP, *Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919*; LMM, KRC, K2/1, 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) casualty book, Vol. I-III, 1915-1918; SA, RASLI, DD/SLI/9/4, 1st Somerset Light Infantry casualty book, 1914-1918; TNA, AIR79, Airmen's Records, 1901-1944; TNA, PIN82, Widows' Pension Forms, 1910-1932; TNA, WO96, Militia Attestation Forms, 1806-1915; TNA, WO161, Prisoners of War Interviews; TNA, WO363, Soldier's service files; TNA, WO364, Soldier's Pension Claims, 1900-1994; TRWFM, 276, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers casualty books, Vol. I and II, 1914-1918.

⁵¹⁹ Only 8.1 percent of men that enlisted in London in 1913 went to its affiliated territorial regiment. For more details on recruitment in London, see; *General Annual Report on the British Army for the Year Ending 30th September 1913*, p. 48; Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, pp. 126-127.

respectively. In comparison, the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) received no more than 2.2 percent of reinforcements from London between 1915 and 1917. Despite a small spike in 1918 at 7.1 percent, this was still relatively small compared to the other three regiments.

As McCartney argues, these differences were influenced by the size of regional populations supporting each regiment. The King's (Liverpool Regiment) drew on the City of Liverpool, which had an estimated population of 746,421 in 1911. Although it supported 17 active battalions in 1916, it could draw on the county of Lancashire and its associate county boroughs, which had a total populace of 4,767,832. In comparison, the Buckinghamshire Battalion had three active units to support, including the 2/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion and 1/1st Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars. Though small, it could only draw on the rural county of Buckinghamshire, which had a total population of 219,551. This made it impossible for the regiment to recruit and build up a large reserve of trained personnel compared to the King's (Liverpool Regiment), who had the flexibility to recruit and distribute men across several reserve units of the same regiment.⁵²⁰ This problem was exacerbated by the War Office's decision to deploy the 2/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion in May 1916. Not only did it remove a previous source of reinforcements, but it added additional strain onto the 3/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion, which only had an estimated 176 fully trained recruits ready for drafting at the end of April 1916.⁵²¹ It was clear that the county struggled to produce the number of men required to support one infantry battalion and this decision aggravated pre-existing demographic constraints.

The 1st Somerset Light Infantry were somewhat affected by this, as it drew upon the rural county of Somerset. Although it had parts of suburban Bristol within its boundaries, its population in 1911 was estimated at 458,080.⁵²² Despite having a larger populace than Buckinghamshire, the regiment supported nine active battalions by 1916 and, theoretically, the 1st Somerset Light Infantry should have witnessed a much faster decline in regimental integrity. Yet, a number of local circumstances and factors delayed this. Firstly, the theatre of conflict each unit served in affected wastage rates. Altogether, only four battalions were deployed on the Western Front by 1916, with five serving elsewhere. Notably, the 2nd

⁵²⁰ *Occupations and Industries, Part I*, pp. 133 and 205; McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, pp. 65-66.

⁵²¹ TNA, WO114/47, Regular army return, 24th April 1916.

⁵²² *Occupations and Industries, Part I*, p. 260.

Somerset Light Infantry remained in India throughout the war on garrison duty. Subsequently, it was joined by the 1/4th, 1/5th, 2/4th and 2/5th Somerset Light Infantry, who came across with the 43rd (Wessex) Division and 45th (2nd Wessex) Division in October and December 1914, respectively. All four battalions undertook garrison responsibilities across India, the Middle East or Asia until 1916 or 1917, before serving in either Mesopotamia or Palestine.⁵²³ The wastage rate was much lower in these theatres and, due to their garrison role, most units did not heavily draw upon their reserve units.

Although the Somerset Light Infantry had an extra active battalion over the Buckinghamshire Battalion on the Western Front, all four were supported by the SR. As discussed, the SR had significant advantages over the Territorial reinforcement system, as it received the bulk of recruits, equipment, and instructors between 1914 and 1916. This, combined with the limited recruitment undertaken by the Territorial reserves of the Somerset Light Infantry, ensured that the 1st Somerset Light Infantry was supported by a more robust and efficient reserve unit than the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion. Lastly, the Somerset Light Infantry were able to draw on other manpower sources within the county in 1916. Whereas all military forces from Buckinghamshire had been committed by the War Office in 1916, both the West Somerset Yeomanry and North Somerset Yeomanry, as well as its reserve units, had not been deployed. Accordingly, the War Office was able to transfer them across to the infantry during the Somme Campaign, which helped to fortify the local identity of the regiment at a pivotal time.⁵²⁴

Nevertheless, regimental integrity, based on pre-war regimental districts, began to break down in 1917 and became almost non-existent by 1918. The 1st Somerset Light Infantry dropped to 34.3 and 18 percent in the same period, whilst the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers and 1st Buckinghamshire Battalion reached an absolute low of 11.6 and 8.2 percent in 1917, respectively. The 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) saw the sharpest decline, dropping from 92.5 percent of reinforcements coming from Liverpool and the surrounding area during 1916, to 38.3, then 27.1 percent, in 1917 and 1918, respectively. Nevertheless, a sharp drop in the local identity of reinforcements did not immediately change the overall composition of a battalion, even if they had experienced heavy casualties. As McCartney demonstrates, 67 and

⁵²³ James, *British Regiments*, pp. 56-57

⁵²⁴ SA, RASLI, DD/SLI/9/4, 1st Somerset Light Infantry casualty book, 1916.

42 percent of men in the unit came from Liverpool and its surrounding areas in 1917 and 1918, respectively.⁵²⁵ Although this may appear contradictory, the excellent medical infrastructure being developed in the UK and on the Western Front mitigated this. As will be discussed in chapter five, an estimated 24.1 percent of casualties sustained were recycled back into the frontline, which helped to preserve regiment identity.

Table 2.9: Percentage of original personnel and subsequent reinforcements received in four battalions, born or resident in the regimental recruitment area and Home Command, 1914-1918.⁵²⁶

Battalions	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
1 st Somerset Light Infantry	77.8	76.2	78.4	75	72.2
1 st Royal Welsh Fusiliers	58.1	67.3	70.5	67.1	
1/6 th King's (Liverpool Regiment)		92.6	98	74	81.4
1/1 st Buckinghamshire Battalion		90.5	66.5	47.3	

Discounting the broader manpower problems experienced from 1917, the decline in local identity superficially supports the argument that the introduction of the TR 'nationalised' the army. Yet, this is misleading. Table 2.9, based on the same methodology as the previous analysis, assesses the percentage of reinforcements that were born or residing in the unit's original recruiting area and Home Command between 1914 and 1918. It demonstrates that reinforcement policy was closely followed between 1916 and 1918, as the majority of reinforcements received by frontline units were drawn from their respective Home Command. Although the 1st Somerset Light Infantry and 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers saw a

⁵²⁵ McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, p. 61.

⁵²⁶ BA, TA/6/11-14, 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion casualty books, Vol. I-IV, 1915-1918; FMP, 1891 Census for England, Scotland and Wales; FMP, 1901 Census for England, Scotland and Wales; FMP, 1911 Census for England and Wales; FMP, 1911 Census for Ireland; FMP, *British Jewry Book, 1914-1920*; FMP, *De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour, 1914-1918*; FMP, *Deserters and Absentees in the Police Gazette, 1914-1919*; FMP, *Liverpool Pals, 1914-1918*; FMP, *Prisoners of War, 1715-1945*; FMP, *Railwaymen Died in the Great War, 1914-1918*; FMP, *Royal Artillery Attestations 1883-1942*; FMP, *Royal Tank Corps Enlistment Records, 1919-1934*; FMP, *Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919*; LMM, KRC, K2/1, 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) casualty book, Vol. I-III, 1915-1918; SA, RASLI, DD/SLI/9/4, 1st Somerset Light Infantry casualty book, 1914-1918; TNA, AIR79, Airmen's Records, 1901-1944; TNA, PIN82, Widows' Pension Forms, 1910-1932; TNA, WO96, Militia Attestation Forms, 1806-1915; TNA, WO161, Prisoners of War Interviews; TNA, WO363, Soldier's service files; TNA, WO364, Soldier's Pension Claims, 1900-1994; TRWFM, 276, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers casualty books, Vol. I and II, 1914-1918.

limited drop from 1916, the proportion of reinforcements drawn from their respective Home Commands were consistent. The former received 78.4, 75 and 72.2 percent of men from Southern Command in 1916, 1917 and 1918 respectively, whilst the latter received 70.5 in 1916 and 67.1 in 1917. The 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) remained relatively high. Despite a drop from 98 to 74 percent of reinforcements from Western Command in 1916 and 1917 respectively, it resurged to 81.4 in 1918. Only the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion experienced a substantial drop, as only 47.3 percent of its reinforcements came from Southern Command in 1917.

Even when reinforcements were received from the TR, it did not necessarily affect this disposition. As McCartney points out, each TR unit was affiliated to a Home Command, which was responsible for supplying it with excess recruits from each county under its jurisdiction. Though having no official regimental connections, she indicates that TR battalions supplied reinforcements to selected regiments within each Home Command. Though impossible to verify if this was official policy, there is evidence to support this claim. For example, the 109th TR, formed from the 19th (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps, drafted 525 reinforcements to frontline units of its old regiment, which equated to 31.8 percent of its total drafts between September 1916 and May 1917.⁵²⁷

This consistency reinforces McCartney's claim that some regiments were able to transition from a local to regional identity. Yet, as she explains, this process was dependent upon the geographical composition in each Home Command. For instance, Western Command was formed of recruitment areas three and four. The former included Cumberland, Lancashire, and Westmorland, whilst the latter consisted of Cheshire, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Wales. Lancashire and its associate county boroughs had a total population of 4,767,832 in 1911, while the combined populations of Cumberland and Westmorland only numbered 329,326.⁵²⁸ Therefore, reinforcements from area three and, as will be seen, Western Command, were likely to come from Lancashire, which enabled the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) to sustain a regional identity.

⁵²⁷ HRO, 170A12W/D/3636-3637, History of the 109th TR; McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, pp. 63-64.

⁵²⁸ *Occupations and Industries, Part I*, pp. 151, 205 and 288; McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, pp. 64-65.

On the other hand, the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers drew on recruitment area four. Collectively, Wales had a population of 2,420,921, whilst Cheshire, Herefordshire and Shropshire numbered 954,779, 114,269 and 246,307, respectively.⁵²⁹ Though the Welsh population formed the majority of area four and, theoretically, could have provided an opportunity to create a broader Welsh identity, only 47.4 and 32.4 percent of all reinforcements in 1916 and 1917 respectively came from Wales. The Welsh population was too small to support three heavily expanded regiments, especially once essential trades in the country, such as mining, became protected occupations from 1916.⁵³⁰ As a result, Welsh reserve battalions were increasingly reliant upon English manpower in Western Command from 1916. Comprising 72.6 percent of the total populace, Englishman from Cheshire, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Lancashire, were regularly used to shore up gaps within the battalion. Even amongst the Welsh recruits, there was considerable disparity between populations in the rural north and industrialised south. As mentioned, the cultural differences between English and Welsh speaking Welshman were pronounced and, as a result, were unlikely to meld into a cohesive national identity.

In Southern Command, regiments struggled to form a strong regional identity due to its geographical diversity. It consisted of 12 counties stretching across Southern England and the Midlands, with a collective population of 5,938,970. It held a number of rural counties, such as Dorset, as well as densely populated cities, including Birmingham in Warwickshire, Bristol in Gloucestershire, and Portsmouth in Hampshire. As a result, the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion, who could no longer be supported by the rural population of Buckinghamshire, received manpower from 11 different counties that, besides Berkshire and Oxfordshire, it had little connection to.⁵³¹ By 1917, only 47.3 percent of the Battalion's reinforcements came from Southern Command. It is not clear why there was such a clear divergence from reinforcement policy, but a collapse in the recruitable population of Buckinghamshire likely led to the War Office's reliance on using London to shore up emerging gaps in the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion.

⁵²⁹ *Occupations and Industries, Part I*, pp. 141, 188, 226, 256, 313, 317, 321, 325, 329, 333, 337, 341, 346, 350, 354 and 358.

⁵³⁰ Beckett, 'The nation in arms', pp. 9-10.

⁵³¹ *Occupations and Industries, Part I*, pp. 129, 133, 148, 160, 164, 178, 183, 248, 260, 282, 292 and 296; McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, p. 64-65.

Although the composition of Southern Command was arbitrary, as there was little connecting these counties together beyond military administration, the 1st Somerset Light Infantry had a different experience. Overall, 93.9, 73.1 and 58.9 percent of reinforcements received from Southern Command in 1916, 1917 and 1918 respectively had connections to Somerset and the South-West. Comprised of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, these counties did have some broader, socio-economic similarities. Notably, Cornwall, Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire were rural counties with no large urban centres, with agriculture representing the most important occupation in each county. Discounting domestic services, which was prominent across the entire country, agriculture was the primary industry of all four counties in 1911, comprising 20.8, 18.9, 17.5 and 21.4 percent of the population engaged in known occupations, respectively.⁵³² Although the urbanisation of Devon had been accelerated by the expansion of Plymouth as a major naval base, it was predominantly a rural county, with agriculture absorbing 15.1 percent of the workforce.⁵³³

There were also significant maritime and naval traditions in Cornwall and Devon. Fishermen were a small, but defined group in Cornwall, with towns and villages dominated by the trade. In Devon, Defence was the second largest occupation due to the vital importance Plymouth held as a naval base. The dockyards at Devonport alone employed over 12,000 civilians by April 1914, representing an estimated 25 percent of the civilian male workforce in Plymouth. Collectively, this led to a higher rate of enlistment into the Royal Navy and, in 1912, it was estimated that more men from Cornwall and Devon served than Wales and Scotland combined.⁵³⁴ There is also evidence to indicate Dorset had similar traditions, as defence was the second largest occupation within the county. Overall, 7,548 men, or 7.4 percent of the employed population, had connections to the Royal Navy, likely centred at the naval dockyards at Portland.⁵³⁵

⁵³² See Appendix 3; *Occupations and Industries, Part I*, pp. 147-150, 164-167, 260-263 and 292-296.

⁵³³ *Occupations and Industries, Part I*, pp. 160-163; Batten, Richard John, 'Devon and the First World War' (University of Exeter PhD Thesis, 2013), pp. 58-59.

⁵³⁴ Batten, 'Devon and the First World War', pp. 115-118; Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 102; Gale, Andy, 'The West Country and the First World War: Recruits and identities' (University of Lancaster PhD Thesis, 2010), p. 36; White, Bonnie, 'Volunteerism and Early Recruitment Efforts in Devonshire, August 1914–December 1915', *The Historical Journal* (2009), pp. 649-650.

⁵³⁵ See Appendix 3; *Occupations and Industries, Part I*, pp. 164-167.

Gloucestershire had little relation to the other counties, however. Despite rural areas having similarities to Dorset and Wiltshire due to the growth of dairy farming from 1875, its socio-economic profile was dominated by the mercantile sectors of Bristol. This led to food, tobacco, drink and Lodging as the primary trade at 11.5 percent, followed closely by dress and the transportation of goods at 11.1 and 9.4 percent, respectively.⁵³⁶

Nevertheless, it is difficult to argue that a collective 'South-Western' identity emerged in the 1st Somerset Light Infantry in the same manner as the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment). Despite similarities, Britain was administratively and culturally decentralised and, as McCartney claims, 'differing dialects, customs, entertainment and occupations defined towns, counties and regions, endowing each with distinguishable characteristics.' Local authorities and institutions influenced everyday life, which limited people's outlook to their locality and county.⁵³⁷ Although there were some military connections throughout the region, such as Yeomanry regiments from Devon, Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire forming the 1st and 2nd South Western Mounted Brigades, there were no clear administrative, cultural, or political links uniting the counties together.⁵³⁸ There was no unifying, influential political figure promoting the South-West as a region, as seen with Lord Derby and Lancashire. Whilst he attempted to protect the interests of soldiers from Lancashire through his personal connections and official positions, such as Chairman of the West Lancashire Territorial Association and his various roles at the War Office, there was no equivalent in the South-West.⁵³⁹ This is unsurprising, however, considering the inherent confusion regarding the geographical makeup of the region, with contemporaries and historians alike failing to agree upon what counties constituted it.⁵⁴⁰

Therefore, reinforcement policy had mixed fortunes in sustaining regimental identity. It did not collapse in 1916, as previously argued, nor was it due to a simple combination of

⁵³⁶ Ibid, pp. 178-182; Howkins, Alun, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), p. 142.

⁵³⁷ McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, p. 57.

⁵³⁸ Becke, A. F., *Order of Battle of Divisions, Part 2A: The Territorial Force Mounted Divisions and the 1st-Line Territorial Force Divisions (42-56)* (HMSO: London, 1935), pp. 4-5 and 27-28.

⁵³⁹ McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, pp. 70-71.

⁵⁴⁰ *National service instruction. N.S.I. No. 2 of 1917*; Batten, 'Devon and the First World', pp. 95 and 128; Gale, 'The West Country and the First World War', pp. 3-4; Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 71; White, 'Volunteerism and Early Recruitment Efforts in Devonshire', pp. 661-662.

broader manpower problems and the TR. With a majority of reinforcements still coming from each battalion's respective Home Command until 1918, reinforcement policy was closely adhered to by military authorities. By extension, the TR itself did not undermine this balance and, at times, reinforced its former regiment or those stationed within the same Home Command. Whilst this demonstrates the War Office's commitment to preserving the regimental system from 1916, the transition from a local to regional identity heavily depended upon the geographical make up of each Home Command. Whilst the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) was supported by Lancashire, which dominated the population of Western Command, it was unfavourable to the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers for the same reason. This, along with overexpansion and the divergent cultural differences between North and South Wales, ensured no clear regional or Welsh identity was formed. Whilst the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion struggled from 1916 due to a lack of recruitable population, it was unique in the sense it relied on London to supply a substantial proportion of its manpower. On the other hand, the 1st Somerset Light Infantry received the majority of its reinforcements from counties that could be classified as the South-West, despite the arbitrary make up of Southern Command. Yet, unlike the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment), this did not translate into a meaningful regional identity as, beyond some broad economic and military connection, it lacked any clear administrative, cultural, and political ties. Thus, reinforcement policy, though successful from an official perspective as it did sustain a broader regional identity in some regiments, it did not always have the desired results.

Between 1914 and 1916, the transformation of the reinforcement system mirrored the chaos of Lord Kitchener's manpower policies. The regular reinforcement system became unrecognisable in light of mass recruitment as Kitchener ignored the sensible advice of the Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Henry Sclater, who recommended a limited expansion of the SR and ER to support expanding regiments. This indifferent approach was quickly shelved however by mounting casualties, falling recruitment rates and predictions of colossal wastage, which spurred Kitchener onto create the Second and Local Reserve to support the New Armies. Though securing additional recruits for the army and helping to make service in the reserve an attractive prospect, he had created three separate organisations that competed for diminishing recruits. This was exacerbated by the Territorial reinforcement system, which had fallen into a series of drafting crises by spring 1915. Though the creation

and recruitment of the second line had progressed quickly, it was plagued by the Territorial Pledge and its Home defence role, which reduced its capacity to produce trained reinforcements. The third line had complicated this further and despite attempts by Kitchener to shift all drafting responsibilities to it in early 1915, it was too small to fully support the TF overseas. This, combined with the failure to remove the Territorial Pledge in May 1915, led to artificial drafting barriers remaining in place until the introduction of the Military Service Acts of 1916. The expansion of both systems was vast and due to its low priority for war material, reserve battalions had insufficient equipment, training facilities and instructors to train reinforcements.

Despite these immense structural difficulties, the War Office continued to blame problems on the lack of manpower. Though two conscription acts were introduced throughout 1916 to provide a renewed stream of manpower, difficulties continued to mount, as seen by the growing number of temporary and permanently unfit soldiers in the reserve. Though the introduction of sophisticated medical apparatus played a key role in recycling wounded veterans back into the frontline from 1915, effective reform only occurred after the Battle of Somme. The TR was introduced in September 1916 and rationalised the reinforcement system that had begun to crumble under the pressure of industrial war. It affirmed the primary role of the SR, ER and Third Line as the regimental reserve, and amalgamated the Second and Local Reserve into one organisation that supported all regiments. Though momentous, as it redistributed vital war material for training and supported all regiments by providing the War Office with the flexibility needed to respond to unexpected demands, historians have focused on the supposed impact this had on the regimental system. Yet, as the data from casualty books demonstrate, regimental identity was highly valued by the War Office. Local identities were preserved as far as possible, but measures were brought in to expand this onto a regional basis. Though the success of this depended upon numerous factors, including the geographical make up of each Home Command, both the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) and 1st Somerset Light Infantry transitioned from local identities to ones that encompassed Lancashire and the South-West of England, respectively. Even if this did not always have the desired effect of bonding men together under a broader identity, as the UK was administratively and culturally decentralised, it demonstrated the efforts went to support the regimental system. Far from

collapsing or being dismantled, the War Office should be praised for its ability to retain the regimental system, albeit in an altered form, throughout industrial war.

Chapter Three

The Manpower Ceiling: The Reinforcement System in the United Kingdom, 1917-1918

The British Army entered 1917 in a precarious state. The introduction of the TR in September 1916 had greatly improved the efficiency of the reinforcement system and provided regiments with access to larger manpower reserves. This was precipitated however by the 420,000 casualties sustained during the Battle of the Somme, which placed an unprecedented strain on manpower reserves.⁵⁴¹ Therefore, the supply and strategic distribution of manpower has come to dominate the historiography related to this period. It has been considered through a series of events, such as the Manpower Committee, the German Spring Offensives and the Maurice debate, which has formed part of the larger debate upon civilian and military control over manpower in the UK.⁵⁴² It is therefore important to expand this beyond this debate to consider the impact this had upon the reinforcement system and how civil and military authorities attempted to stretch manpower, Britain's most valuable and finite resource, to its upmost limit.

This chapter will therefore examine how the reinforcement system developed in light of the growing manpower crisis. It will consider the ongoing evolution of the TR through Young Soldier and Graduated Battalions, and how these changes were implemented in line with the changing demographic of recruits, which became increasingly young or physically weaker from 1917. Despite a multitude of problems, including recruit distribution and a lack of NCO instructors, the War Office reshaped the reinforcement system to match the manpower it received from compulsion, which stands in contrast to the chaos witnessed in earlier years. It will also consider the strategic distribution of manpower and whether, as some contemporaries and historians claim, the War Cabinet withheld men from the BEF before the German Spring Offensive in March 1918.⁵⁴³ Unlike the historiography, however, this will go beyond a focus on Lloyd George and the 'faceless' War Office to consider this from

⁵⁴¹ TNA, WO32/5091, Letter from Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig to War Office, 27th April 1917; Beckett, Ian F. W., Bowman, Timothy and Connelly, Mark, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 301.

⁵⁴² Grieves, Keith, *The Politics of Manpower, 1914-1918* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Woodward, David, *Lloyd George and the Generals* (Newark: Delaware University Press, 1983).

⁵⁴³ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 348-349; Harris, J. P., *Douglas Haig and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 419-420 and 433; Woodward, David R., 'Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army of Men prior to the German offensive of 21 March 1918?', *The Historical Journal*, 27:1 (1984), pp. 241-252.

a thematic perspective. It will focus upon the competing policies in both the MNS and War Office, as well as the state of industry and the interior manpower economy of the army throughout 1918. By doing so, it will demonstrate the Britain had reached its manpower ceiling at the end of 1917 and could not maintain its military and industrial efforts simultaneously. Though the emergency measures introduced throughout 1918 were vital to sustaining the BEF throughout the German Spring Offensive, it had absorbed the last remnants of available manpower. As a result, thoughts in civil and military circles quickly moved from what military forces were desirable to achieve victory, to what could be maintained after the manpower ceiling had been shattered by the search for recruits in 1918.

The War Office had placed great faith in conscription to resolve the emerging manpower crisis in 1916. Yet, without any clear strategy to distribute manpower between industry and the armed forces, as well as the inexperience of local tribunals who received little guidance from the government, 839,000 of 1,029,000 men conscripted in the first three months of 1916 were awarded some form of exemption. Though 809,272 men of various medical categories were enlisted under the Military Service Acts of 1916 in the first 12 months, the Army Council were adamant that this fell far below what was needed and, more importantly, what could be supplied by the nation.⁵⁴⁴

This was seemingly recognised in government as well when David Lloyd George became Prime Minister of the war-time coalition in December 1916. He had played a critical role in the downfall of the previous administration headed by H.H. Asquith, who had failed to create any definitive manpower policy throughout 1916. Though he had created the Manpower Distribution Board in August 1916, it did little to settle the distribution of men between industry and the army, which led to Lloyd George, as Secretary of State for War, advocating for industrial compulsion. This, he argued, was the only means to secure additional

⁵⁴⁴ Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives (LHCMA), Robertson 8/5, Letter from CIGS, Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, to Councillor John MacKeith, 22nd November 1916; TNA, WO33/881, Army Council meetings, January-December 1916; TNA, WO162/27, Memorandum on compulsory service, [ND] c. May 1915; TNA, WO162/28, Recruitment area returns until 11th March 1916; Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower*, pp. 40-89; McDermott, James, *British Military Service Tribunals, 1916-1918: 'a very much abused body of men'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp. 11-35.

men for both industry and the army, which required an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 workers and 940,000 recruits in 1917, respectively.⁵⁴⁵

Yet, a manpower policy that balanced the needs of industry and the army, in relation to both wastage rates overseas and available manpower and womanpower across the UK, did not emerge upon Lloyd George's ascension. He had pulled back from his earlier demands and, as Keith Grieves claims, the topic of manpower was left to a series of powerless, *ad hoc* committees until the winter of 1917. Though the historiography has considered how this evolved into MNS and the Manpower Committee, which provided the first set of strategic priorities, in November and December 1917 respectively, little attention has been dedicated to the impact this had on the British Army. Though broad recruitment figures and goals have been outlined, few consider the planning difficulties this posed to the War Office. With increasing disparity between the amount of manpower they were promised and would eventually receive, the Army Council could not undertake any form of extensive planning that could considered the long term sustainability of the British Army. As will be discussed, the difficulties to resolve this throughout 1917 led to radical changes in the reinforcement system, as the War Office looked for untapped sources of manpower.⁵⁴⁶

At the end of 1916, the Army Council requested 800,000 'A' and 140,000 'B' recruits, who were fit for frontline or rearward services overseas respectively, to cover wastage throughout 1917. This was to be considered by the newly created National Service Department, which had been created in December 1916 to, 'regulate the supply of workers and men for all industries, occupations, and services (including the naval and military services)'.⁵⁴⁷ The Director-General of National Service, Neville Chamberlain, outlined to the War Cabinet in January 1917 that to fulfil this request and maintain the British Army overseas, 350,000 'A' and 100,000 'B' (and below) recruits were needed between January and March,

⁵⁴⁵ TNA, WO162/28, 'The Position and Prospects of Recruiting' by Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Sir Nevil Macready, 31st May 1917; Beckett, Bowman and Connolly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 116.

⁵⁴⁶ Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower*, pp. 90-180; Hine, Alison, *Refilling Haig's Armies: The Replacement of British Infantry Casualties on the Western Front, 1916-1919* (Warwick: Helion, 2018), pp. 149-162, 170-171 and 212-226, 235-236, 242-243 and 250-251.

⁵⁴⁷ TNA, WO162/28, 'Prospects of Recruiting' by Macready, 31st May 1917; Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower*, p. 76; Macpherson, W. G., *History of the Great War based on Official Documents: Medical Services, General History, Vol. I: Medical services in the United Kingdom; in British garrisons overseas; and during operations against Tsingtau, in Togoland, the Cameroons and South-West Africa* (London: HMSO, 1921), p. 123.

so drafts could be provided up until June 1917. To provide this, Chamberlain recommended the immediate release of all men aged 18 to 22, estimated at around 280,000, from industry. This would be achieved by limiting each tribunal's jurisdiction from occupational to personal circumstances only, and withdrawing all exemptions for men born between 1895 and 1899. Though this would cause disruption in essential industries, as Lloyd George had abandoned his call for industrial compulsion, it would resolve the short term manpower deficit and create the void needed in labour to establish Chamberlain's 'Industrial Army', which was formed of citizens or ex-servicemen who volunteered to transfer from non-essential to essential industries. Cabinet approval was not forthcoming, however, due to resistance from governmental departments. This included the influential Minister of Munitions, Christopher Addison, who had voiced his concerns to Lloyd George before Chamberlain's proposal was presented to the War Cabinet. Overall, only 100,000 men from agriculture, mining and munitions work were to be withdrawn and allocated to the army, as Chamberlain's 'clean cut' would not be applied to a broad list of industries deemed of national importance, such as steel production.⁵⁴⁸

These limited measures produced few men, however. Chamberlain, who had not been granted a Cabinet office, lacked the authority needed to determine manpower priorities and enforce change across governmental departments. Though 'empowered' to transfer men from one department to another, the six that vied for manpower could launch an appeal to the War Cabinet. For instance, Addison claimed in February that it was impossible to release 50,000 men from munition firms as demanded, nor concede future claims, without 'efficient substitutes', as it would damage the output of key armaments.⁵⁴⁹

Rather than take definitive action, the War Cabinet asked Lord Rhondda to overview the manpower situation, which was swiftly presented in March. It was a thorough review that outlined the difficult situation facing Britain. The Army Council had demanded 550,000 'A' and 'B I' recruits, who could undertake frontline and garrison duties abroad respectively, for April to July to cover wastage and pre-existing deficiencies. There was, however, only 2,000,000 'A' men left in civilian life, with 1,500,000 in protected industry. Of the 700,000

⁵⁴⁸ TNA, CAB23/1/39, 39th War Cabinet meeting, 19th January 1917; Grievs, *The Politics of Manpower*, pp. 91-96; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 151-152.

⁵⁴⁹ TNA, CAB23/1/64, 64th War Cabinet meeting, 13th February 1917; Grievs, *The Politics of Manpower*, pp. 95-96; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 153.

men under the age of 31, 650,000 were in reserved occupations and, to protect industrial output, no more than 250,000 could be substituted over the next four months.⁵⁵⁰

Table 3.1: Number of men released by government departments in accordance with the Rhondda Committee, 13th July 1917.⁵⁵¹

Department	To be released	Released to Date (%)	Actually posted, and now in Army (%)
Munitions	124,000	9,600 (7.7)	4,000 (3.2)
Coal Mines	42,000	16,560 (39.4)	10,695 (25.4)
Railways	33,000	30,580 (92.7)	13,883 (42.1)
Docks	7,000	2,723 (38.9)	0
Civil Service	2,000	0	0
Police	1,000	800 (80)	800 (80)
Other	40,000	0	0
Total	249,000	60,263 (24.3)	28,578 (11.5)

The War Cabinet approved this with minor reservations, but only one recruit had been supplied to the War Office by May and, in July, it became clear that the process had failed.⁵⁵² Table 3.1 demonstrates that only 60,263, or 24.3 percent, of the 249,000 workers to be combed out of industry had been supplied to the War Office by July. Only 28,578, or 11.5 percent, of this total had been posted to the army, though this was likely due to difficulties within the War Office recruitment machinery, which had suffered from an extensive backlog in medical examinations since January 1917.⁵⁵³ Upon further discussion within the War Cabinet, departments such as the Ministry of Munitions claimed they could only provide 30,000 of the 124,000 men promised, whilst the Coal Controller expected significant delays before he could obtain the 42,000 demanded.⁵⁵⁴ Though the lack of a central organisation to oversee this was the critical issue, the process was undermined by two other factors. Firstly, the National Service Department failed to provide the substitutes needed in industry to relieve fit men for the armed forces. It enlisted 114,000 people for the 'Industrial Army' between January and March 1917, but only 46,000 were deemed available, as most were

⁵⁵⁰ TNA, CAB23/2/21, 103rd War Cabinet meeting, 23rd March 1917; Macpherson, *Medical Services, General History*, Vol. I, pp. 123.

⁵⁵¹ TNA, CAB23/3/33, 185th War Cabinet meeting, 13th July 1917.

⁵⁵² TNA, CAB24/3/37, 'Outstanding questions from Rhondda Committee Report', 31st March 1917; TNA, WO162/28, 'Prospects of Recruiting' by Macready, 31st May 1917; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 156.

⁵⁵³ Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower*, pp. 97-98; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 153.

⁵⁵⁴ TNA, CAB23/3/33, 185th War Cabinet meeting, 13th July 1917.

already in protected industries. Though it is unknown how many volunteers were posted to industry, one estimate suggests only 388 were redirected into essential trades.⁵⁵⁵ Whilst this can be attributed to the grandiose nature of the scheme, which misjudged national attitudes, there was also stern resistance from organised labour, who had been alienated by the 'phantom' threat of industrial compulsion and the decision to revoke the Trade Card Scheme. This system had been established by the Asquith Government in November 1916, and allowed Trade Unions to determine which members, based on their skill set, would receive exemptions. Despite being dormant, as unskilled workers had become an important cog for mass industrial output, the government's attempt to impose their own scheme based upon age and occupation had led to widespread resistance. This was headed by the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, who organised an unofficial strike that involved as many as 200,000 workers from the engineering sector. This issue regularly paralysed decision making in the War Cabinet and undermined their ability to enforce substitution, as the fear of 'militant labour' remained throughout the war.⁵⁵⁶

One practical reform to emerge from the Rhondda Committee was the introduction of the Military Service (Review of Exemptions) Act, 1917, in April, which enabled the War Office to call up men or ex-serviceman who had been rejected, or discharged, as unfit for overseas service. It netted 70,000 'A' and 60,000 'B' men, which helped to offset the shortfall in recruits obtained through industrial substitution. It was, however, extremely unpopular due to concerns about the legitimacy and fairness of medical examinations, as medical authorities were accused of being indiscriminate. Similar to the arbitrary methods of Travelling Medical Boards discussed in chapter two, many men who had poor health and physique were reclassified as 'A' and conscripted due to the urgent need to obtain recruits. This militarisation of medicine, which placed the needs of the army and state above the individual and their health, led to protests in Parliament and across the country. The newly formed National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers led the

⁵⁵⁵ Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower*, pp. 92-93, 112-113 and 127-128.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 109-114 and 142; TNA, CAB23/2/45 and 56, 127th and 138th War Cabinet meeting, 27th April and 15th May 1917; TNA, CAB 23/4/26 and 78, 252nd and 304th War Cabinet meeting, 18th October and 21st December 1917; TNA, CAB23/5/7 and 21, 315th and 329th War Cabinet meeting, 5th and 23rd January 1918; Beckett, Ian F. W., *The Great War, 1914-1918* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), pp. 370-371; Beckett, Bowman and Connolly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 118.

resistance, and demanded, 'every man once before any man twice.'⁵⁵⁷ Though this, as well as other factors, led to the recruitment machinery being centralised under civilian authority in the MNS on 1st November 1917, similar accusations emerged during the immediate aftermath of the German Spring Offensive. As will be discussed, civilian, as well as military authorities, were willing to dispense with tight medical regulations if needed.⁵⁵⁸

Though augmented by the Military Service (Conventions with Allied States) Act, 1917, in July, which permitted British and allied citizens to be conscripted by allied or British governments respectively, the indecision over manpower policy continued until the creation of the MNS and Manpower Committee in November and December 1917, respectively.⁵⁵⁹ Chamberlain had resigned as Director of National Service beforehand in August 1917 and, within a few days, the Director of Recruitment at the War Office, Brigadier-General Auckland Geddes, was selected as his successor. This was an unusual choice, as he was a surgeon and intermittent amateur soldier before the outbreak of war. Yet, he rose to prominence in France as an Assistant Adjutant General at GHQ in 1915 and, upon his return to the UK, commanded respect from politicians due to his administrative expertise in various aspects of civilian and military manpower. The War Office and the Secretary of State for War, Lord Derby, also had great faith in him, as he knew the immense pressures felt by the War Office due to the rapid decline in conscription yields. After securing promises regarding his tenure, including appointment as a minister and election as a Conservative MP at the Basingstoke by-election in October 1917, Geddes established the MNS's functions to review the whole state of British Manpower. Whilst he did not micro-manage how firms and governmental departments allocated manpower within industries, he controlled the distribution of manpower between trades and, from 1st November, the War Office's recruitment machinery, which enabled him to balance manpower between industry and the army.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁷ CAB23/3/17, 169th War Cabinet meeting, 26th June 1917; Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 118; Grievess, *The Politics of Manpower*, p. 131.

⁵⁵⁸ TNA, NATS1/762, Reports on criticism of Medical Assessors in Press and Parliament, April-June 1918.

⁵⁵⁹ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 118.

⁵⁶⁰ Grievess, Keith, 'Geddes, Auckland Campbell, first Baron Geddes', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-33359> [last accessed 29/11/2022]; Grievess, *The Politics of Manpower*, pp. 133-134, 137-140 and 149-151.

In December 1917, Lord Derby raised his concerns again over the strength of the BEF, which was 100,000 men below strength and projected to fall much lower, with the infantry expected to be 250,000 short of its establishment by March 1918. Though presented as the number of reinforcements needed, this estimate is misleading, as it included 110,000 recruits for new units. Though this was centred on a substantial expansion of mechanised firepower, including 48,000 for the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), 40,000 for (predominantly heavy) artillery and 22,000 split between the MGC, Tank Corps and Royal Engineers, military authorities prioritised these above recruits for the infantry. Though these arms were essential to the operational capacity of the BEF, neither GHQ nor the Army Council were willing to concede that they could not endlessly graft new units onto pre-existing formations. As Geddes complained in May 1918, neither military nor political authorities, 'foresaw the vast numbers of men which the developments of the machine side of warfare would require, with the result that the Army Council is now embarrassed by the multitudinous responsibilities which it has assumed with [the] full authority of the Government.'⁵⁶¹

Nevertheless, Geddes warned the War Cabinet in December 1917 that Britain had reached its manpower ceiling. This verdict was based on his comprehensive examination of all manpower under civilian and military control in November 1917, which considered the Army Council's demand for 600,000 'A' recruits by 30th June 1918. This, alongside their request for 320,000 recruits of lower medical category and the Admiralty's demand for 90,000 'A' men for the Royal Navy, could not be met by the nation. Though the Army's total could be reduced to 550,000 'A' recruits due to the return of wounded personnel, the combined total of 640,000 would need to be drawn from the remaining 'A' men of military age in civil life, which only numbered 950,000. Most were engaged in essential industries and, under existing legal powers, no more than 150,000 could be withdrawn without serious disruption to industrial output. This, combined with the growing demands of industry, which was estimated at nearly 300,000, led to a bleak situation. Geddes provided a breakdown of possible legislative changes that could obtain more men, including conscription in Ireland and the

⁵⁶¹ LHCMA, Robertson 4/2/14 and 15, 'Recruiting for the Army' by Secretary of State for War, Lord Derby, 28th November 1917 and 'Man-power for the Army' by Army Council, 3rd December 1917; TNA, CAB23/4/63 and 67, 289th and 293rd War Cabinet meetings, 3rd and 6th December 1917; TNA, CAB27/14, Cabinet Committee on Manpower report, March 1918; TNA, NATS1/354, 'Maintenance of the Armed Forces' by Minister for National Service, Sir Auckland Geddes, 22nd May 1918; TNA, WO32/5091, Letter from Army Council to Haig, 3rd November 1917.

alteration of military age for active service. Yet, he emphasised that this was irrelevant without a clear strategic policy that determined the government's priorities. Specifically, 'what proportion of the army requirements is to be given priority over all industrial demands' and, by extension, 'what industrial requirements are to be given priority over the balance of Army Requirements?'.⁵⁶²

This recommendation was critical, as it led to the formation of the Manpower Committee in December 1917. Composed of War Cabinet members led by the Prime Minister, they established a clear precedent of priorities needed by Geddes to facilitate the distribution of manpower. The Royal Navy and air services, which would not form into the Royal Air Force (RAF) until 1st April 1918, were given top priority above 'all other services'. This was not a blank cheque, however, as the senior service, including the Royal Naval Air Service, could not recruit above 50,000 'A' men for 1918, rather than the 90,000 they demanded. Though compulsion had never been implemented for the Royal Navy, the introduction of the Military Service Act, 1916, had led to a sufficient intake of volunteers, who wished to avoid being conscripted for the army. Ship building came second, due to its importance in transporting American soldiers to Europe and maintaining imports of food and raw materials. Third came the construction of aircraft and tanks, with output expanded by employing excess labour from the construction industry. In fourth was the provision of raw materials, including food and timber, whilst the army came fifth. It was originally allocated 100,000 'A' and 100,000 'B' and 'C' recruits from industry for 1918, but the number of 'A' recruits was raised from 100,000 to 150,000. This was in addition to 120,000 'A' youths who, as will be discussed, would be absorbed into the reinforcement system upon turning 18 years and one month of age.⁵⁶³

The army's total allocation of 'A' personnel was low, especially as the RFC was prioritised above other arms and corps. It was, however, double what has been previously stated in the historiography, which has led some, such as David R. Woodward, to claim Lloyd George withheld manpower from the army. This was due to the deteriorating relationship

⁵⁶² TNA, NATS1/354, 'Problem of the Maintenance of the Armed Forces' by Geddes, November 1917; Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower*, pp. 166-167; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 216-217.

⁵⁶³ 1919 (Cd. 325), *The War Cabinet Report: Report for the year 1918*; TNA, CAB27/14, Cabinet Committee on Manpower report, March 1918; TNA, NATS1/354, Memoranda by Geddes, 'The Supply of Personnel for the Air Force', 20th March 1918, 'Maintenance of the Forces', 24th March 1918 and 'The manpower situation, 1917-1918', 17th June 1918; Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower*, pp. 170-173 and 182-183; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 218.

between Lloyd George and Haig throughout 1917, which had reached its lowest point in December. At the beginning of his premiership, the Prime Minister had expressed doubts about Haig's leadership and ability to wage the war without undue losses. Yet, he was unable to wrestle control of strategic decision-making from Haig and the military, nor, as discussed, resolve the ongoing problems with manpower distribution. Therefore, he sought to limit the scope of British offensives, which saw the political decision to (partially) subordinate Haig to the French Army throughout the Nivelle Offensive in April and May 1917. He believed that the French could 'achieve better results with fewer losses' and was impressed by the ability of the French commander-in-Chief, General Robert Nivelle, who had successfully orchestrated counter-attacks that had secured Verdun between October and December 1916. Though Haig made critical mistakes during the Arras Offensive in April and May 1917, its successful opening, which included the capture of Vimy Ridge on 12th April, was in stark contrast to Nivelle's spectacular failure to achieve the swift victory he promised. This undermined Lloyd George's influence and strengthened the War Cabinet's confidence in Haig, which allowed him to push for a British offensive in Flanders. Though Lloyd George hoped the limited stream of reinforcements would lead to 'less costly tactics and a cautious strategy', the Third Battle of Ypres had failed to create a definitive breakout and had led to 275,000 casualties. This, as well as the sudden reversal at the Battle of Cambrai in November 1917, led to questions 'about the competence of Haig and GHQ [which] would reverberate for months.'⁵⁶⁴

This, according to Woodward, enabled Lloyd George to form the Manpower Committee, which significantly reduced the amount of manpower allocated to the army. It asserted civil control and, most importantly, stopped Haig from launching futile assaults that were only possible 'if he were given a carte blanche for all able-bodied civilians'.⁵⁶⁵ Yet, as Grieves points out, 'it is important to emphasise that the profound shift in their relations stemmed from political problems arising from the management of material, manpower and

⁵⁶⁴ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 338; Grieves, Keith, 'Haig and the Government, 1916-1918' in Bond, Brian and Cave, Nigel (eds), *Haig: A Reappraisal 70 years on* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 1999), pp.108-113; Harris, *Haig and the First World*, pp. 281-283, 288-291, 333-334 and 404-408; Woodward, 'Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army', pp. 241-248 and 251-252.

⁵⁶⁵ Woodward, 'Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army', p. 248.

morale in the light of uncertain outcomes... rather than unforgiving personality clashes.’⁵⁶⁶ Lloyd George’s desire to prevent Haig from conducting an offensive in the Spring of 1918 was evident, but it had been triggered by Geddes’ grim assessment and the difficulties of managing manpower throughout 1917. Though Haig’s conduct on the Western Front played a factor, it was part of a broader breakdown in civil-military relations, which saw the government assert its control over the war effort. This disposition inevitably influenced the Manpower Committee, who began to question the War Office’s expertise. They assumed the wastage figures provided by the Army Council, which estimated a permanent loss of 583,200 in 1918, were excessive, and became increasingly suspicious about the interior manpower economy of the British Army. Though the number of soldiers in the UK will be discussed later, the Manpower Committee claimed it was possible to provide soldiers from the home army and, ‘avoid wastage of manpower by the adoption of suitable strategy and tactics, and by the development of fortifications.’⁵⁶⁷

This viewpoint severely underestimated the offensive capabilities of the German Army, especially as divisions were transferred from the Eastern to Western Front after the collapse of Russia. Though Lloyd George and, by extension, the War Cabinet, should be criticised for these unfounded conclusions, there were misunderstandings between civil and military authorities over this topic. Whilst a symptom of the breakdown in trust noted above, Haig undermined his own position twice in January 1918 by downplaying the possibility, and severity of, a German offensive to Lloyd George and the War Cabinet. Nevertheless, these factors were part of a growing belief that the Entente needed to conserve its manpower and resources until 1919. The continued output of munitions would increase the mechanised firepower available to, and compensate for the drop in, infantry on the Western Front, whilst the time gained would enable the United States of America to mobilise and deploy an operational army on the Western Front.⁵⁶⁸ There was even a strong hope that this deficit

⁵⁶⁶ Grievies, ‘Haig and the Government, 1916-1918’, pp. 116-117; Woodward, ‘Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army’, p. 244

⁵⁶⁷ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 345-349; Grievies, *The Politics of Manpower*, pp. 168-170; Harris, *Haig and the First World War*, p. 420; Hine, *Refilling Haig’s Armies*, pp. 218-219; Lloyd George, David, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, 1917-1918, Vol. V* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1936), pp. 148-150, 169-171 and 176; Woodward, ‘Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army’, pp. 243-244 and 247-248.

⁵⁶⁸ TNA, CAB27/14, Cabinet Committee on Manpower report, March 1918; Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 349-350; Harris, *Haig and the First World War*, pp. 420-423; Woodward, ‘Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army’, p. 248.

could be offset by the incorporation of 150 American battalions into the BEF but, as will be discussed in chapter five, this never materialised.⁵⁶⁹ Though the Manpower Committee had allowed Lloyd George to 'limit' the personnel allocated to the army, it was based on a comprehensive evaluation of industrial and military problems facing Britain.

Despite what the Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Sir Nevil Macready, described as 'a terrifying state of affairs' in January 1918, Geddes was considered a fair arbiter of manpower by the War Office.⁵⁷⁰ Though the proportion of manpower allocated to the armed forces was low, he used his position to scrutinise departments, and associate industrial firms, to ensure they were utilising manpower efficiently. For example, concerns were raised by MNS, Northern Region, in May 1918 about eight firms, including iron works and shipyards, who were possibly holding an estimated 1,150 workers superfluous to need. Though further concerns, based on a sample of letters from young men who were 'held back' from enlistment by their companies, were dismissed as inaccurate after investigation, this correspondence had prompted a joint review of each company's workforce by representatives of the MNS and Admiralty. In April, Geddes had demanded an inspection of three munition factories in Birmingham and Sheffield by independent experts to determine if they were purposefully withholding 'A' men. This had been prompted by fears held by the East Midland and Yorkshire Regions of the MNS, who believed these men were being unnecessarily retained on the pretext of vital work. Though the results are unknown, it is clear that Geddes took this issue seriously and ensured firms were held accountable for the manpower they utilised.⁵⁷¹

Nevertheless, these decisions had significant ramifications for the British Army and, as will be assessed in chapter five, led to the reduction of 134 battalions across the BEF in January 1918. Though the Manpower Committee had recommended this, it is clear that the root cause of these consequences can be traced back to the War Cabinet's indecision over manpower. The consistent alteration of projected manpower that could, and then could not, be gained

⁵⁶⁹ TNA, CAB23/4/69 and 81, 295th and 307th War Cabinet meeting, 10th and 27th December 1917; TNA, CAB23/5/13, 15, 22 and 30, 222nd, 224th, 328th and 338th War Cabinet meeting, 14th, 16th and 22nd January and 4th February 1918.

⁵⁷⁰ Imperial War Museum (IWM), 10414, HHW 2/2A/3, Letter from Macready to General Sir Henry Wilson, 7th January 1918; Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower*, p. 138; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 161-162.

⁵⁷¹ TNA, NATS1/288, Correspondence regarding inspection of excess labour at munitions factories, April-June 1918; TNA, NATS1/289, Correspondence regarding complaints of excess labour at shipyards and other firms, May-July 1918.

from industry through substitution, placed Macready in an impossible situation regarding the effective management of the British Army. Whilst Grieves is correct to state that the demands made by the War Office were unsustainable in light of dwindling manpower assets within civil life, the War Cabinet needed to provide firm direction.⁵⁷² Even if this were below what military authorities demanded, it would have enabled Macready and the Army Council to seriously consider the long term sustainability of the British Army. Though they could accurately predict the number of reinforcements available for operations at short intervals throughout 1917, it was impossible to make any clear cut decision regarding the organisation of the British Army until these questions had been answered.⁵⁷³

Whether this would have influenced War Office policy at this particular juncture is impossible to ascertain. The Army Council felt 'duty bound' to highlight the risks attached to an understrength BEF throughout 1917, whilst Haig maintained his determination to continue the Third Battle of Ypres in the face of high casualties, limited progress, and vague warnings from Robertson, who wished to limit the offensive due to the deteriorating state of the Entente. Yet, it is noteworthy that the decision to reduce each division from 13 to 10 battalions in January 1918 had been originally suggested and rejected in February 1917, after the War Cabinet agreed to provide 100,000 men from industry between January and March. This does not, however, exonerate military authorities, who made extremely doubtful decisions during this period of uncertainty, including the choice to increase its manpower liabilities by deploying the 57th (2nd West Lancashire), 58th (2nd/1st London Regiment), 59th (2nd North Midland), 62nd (2nd West Riding) and 66th (2nd East Lancashire) Divisions overseas between January and March 1917. Nevertheless, It is clear that a strategic manpower policy created by government was essential to guide the expansion and sustainability of the armed forces in a total war of attrition.⁵⁷⁴

The inability to call up a large proportion of 'A' graded men from industry had a profound impact upon the reinforcement system throughout 1917. It forced the War Office

⁵⁷² Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower*, pp. 174 and 203.

⁵⁷³ TNA, WO32/5091, letters and Memoranda between Haig and War Office, November 1916 – November 1917.

⁵⁷⁴ LHCMA, Robertson 4/2/6/11, Memoranda on organisation of British Army and manpower received by War Office, February-August 1917; Becke, A. F., *Order of Battle of Divisions, Part 2B: 2nd Line Territorial Force Divisions (57th-69th) with The Home Service Divisions (71st-73rd) and 74th and 75th Divisions* (London: HMSO, 1937), pp. 7, 14, 22, 46-47 and 73; Harris, *Haig and the First World War*, pp. 364-382.

to consider alternative solutions and, with ongoing uncertainty at the strategic level, tapped into two underutilised sources that were immediately available: youths under the age of 19 and men of lower medical categories.⁵⁷⁵ Indeed, the Inspector-General of the Infantry, Major-General G. A. A. Egerton, had recorded the increasing number of young soldiers of 18 being conscripted for active service in late 1916.⁵⁷⁶ Despite populist interpretation that youths were caught up in the 'excitement of war' and enlisted in droves, historians have yet to comment on how young men enlisted, or were conscripted under the various Military Service Acts, into the reinforcement system from 1916.⁵⁷⁷ Indeed, youths, who were categorised as 'A IV' and liable for service upon turning 18 under the Military Service Acts of 1916, were not called up until the age of 18 years and seven months. Though the War Office outlined that no one under the age of 19 could be drafted overseas, as they were deemed unable to withstand the physical and mental rigours of active service, youths were called up in advance to ensure they were trained and ready for service as they turned 19.⁵⁷⁸ Compulsion brought in most recruits, but youths under this age could volunteer in advance. Though this may have been to avoid the stigma of conscription, the enlistment of youths had been a long term tradition in the Late Victorian and Edwardian armies. The former regularly relied upon the 'special enlistments' of underaged and physically deprived adolescents to meet recruitment targets, whilst 1,880 youths aged between 14 and 18 were officially enlisted into the latter between 1905 to 1906.⁵⁷⁹ The TF was even more attractive and an estimated 40,000 soldiers were under the age of 19 in 1913.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁵ Though adults by modern opinion and terminology, military authorities saw, and regularly described these men as 'youths'. Therefore, this term will be adopted in relation to all soldiers under the age of 19.

⁵⁷⁶ IWM, 13802, Reports by the Inspector-General of the Infantry, Major-General G. A. A. Egerton, on 4th Training Reserve (TR) Brigade and 'number of 'A IV' recruits in the reserve', 10-11th and 14th October 1916.

⁵⁷⁷ van Emden, Richard, *Boy Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Headline Book Publishing, 2005).

⁵⁷⁸ TNA, CAB23/1/19, War Cabinet minutes, Appendix II, 19th January 1917; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 174 and 307-308; Macpherson, W. G., *History of the Great War based on Official Documentation: Medical Services, General History, Vol. II: The Medical Services on the Western Front, and during Operations in France and Belgium in 1914 and 1915* (London: HMSO, 1923), pp. 120-124.

⁵⁷⁹ Bowman, Timothy and Connelly, Mark, *The Edwardian Army: Recruiting, Training, and Deploying the British Army, 1902-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 46 and 51; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 174; Spiers, Edward M., *The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 123 and 129.

⁵⁸⁰ Beckett, Ian F. W., 'The Territorial Force', in Beckett, Ian F. W. and Simpson, Keith (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A Social study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 129.

Though sensible in practice, as it ensured recruits were trained and ready to be sent overseas upon coming of age, there was growing confusion over how 'A IV' soldiers should be organised and trained within the reinforcement system. At the beginning of October 1916, the 4th TR Brigade had received an estimated 1,500 'A IV' men and, by 1st January 1917, there were 35,033 'A IV' soldiers in the reinforcement system, which equated to 15.4 percent of all 'A' graded soldiers. Despite Alison Hine's claim that all recruits were organised and trained in separate companies according to Army Council instructions (ACI), anomalies had emerged. Though some units, such as the 19th TR Battalion, formed them into separate companies, which was deemed by Egerton as the best method of training younger recruits, many, including the 20th TR Battalion, intermixed them with older men across all companies. In the same vein, only a proportion were trained on the 14 week syllabus, whilst some reserve battalions developed their own courses that were less intense with shorter hours.⁵⁸¹

These inconsistencies had possible ramifications for the training and physical strength of youths if left to regimental authorities. There was the risk that those who undertook limited training on independent courses may lack key skills by the time they were drafted, whilst those who enlisted before the age of 18 years and seven months would complete this or the 14 week syllabus before reaching the age of 19. This could lead to needless repetition or assignment to other duties, such as fatigues, which would undermine progressive training. Both possibilities could also impact their physical development. As Egerton noted, there was a significant variation in each recruits' health and physique, who ranged from fully developed adults to those who were, 'little more than children.' Though many were likely accepted on the basis of developing their strength through steady diet and training, as outlined in chapter two, a clear regime was needed to ensure their physical development.⁵⁸²

Egerton suggested to GHQ Home Forces in October 1916 that all youths under 18 years and seven months should be formed into special companies. Their parade hours should be shorter, with regimental officers organising compulsory games and sports. This, alongside their training, would reduce pressure on them, build up strength and avoid a continual

⁵⁸¹ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on 4th TR Brigade and 'number of 'A IV' recruits in the reserve', 10-11th and 14th October 1916; TNA, WO114/31, Regular army return, 1st January 1917; TNA, WO114/50, TF return, 1st January 1917; TNA, WO293/6, ACI 158, 26th January 1917; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 174.

⁵⁸² IWM 13802, Reports by Egerton on 'number of 'A IV' recruits in the reserve', 14th October 1916, 26th TR Brigade, 25th May 1917 and Felixstowe SR Brigade, 26th June 1917; Rawling, Bill, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p. 7.

repetition of the 14 week syllabus. This issue had reached the War Office by early 1917, who outlined in February that all 'A IV' recruits under 18 years and eight months were to be posted to select TR battalions. They would solely organise and train youths of this age on a six month training syllabus whilst older recruits, as well as those who reached this age after enlistment, were to be posted to the remainder of the TR to carry out the standardised 14 week training syllabus.⁵⁸³

Despite Egerton's conviction that his reports had led to the formation of 'A IV' battalions, the War Office had already begun to see them as a means to create a general reserve. As the Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Sir Nevil Macready, told the War Cabinet in January 1917, the ruling to draft soldiers at the age of 19 was not a legal precedent, but a decision based upon the Army Council's discretion. Though it would have to be explained and defended in Parliament, military authorities had the legal mandate to draft recruits at a younger age. Macready therefore requested the right to enlist and train youths from the age of 18 years and one month so, if an emergency arose, fully trained recruits under 19 could be drafted overseas.⁵⁸⁴ Though Macready saw this as a necessary measure to offset the growing uncertainty over the number of future recruits in 1917, it led to Britain becoming the only nation within the British Empire to conscript youths from the age of 18. Both Canada and New Zealand conscripted men from the age of 20, which demonstrates the anxiety felt over manpower in the War Office.⁵⁸⁵ Though serious, even more stringent procedures were adopted in the Second World War, when youths could be conscripted at 18 through the National Service (Armed Forces) Act, 1939. Whilst the age of active service was initially pinned

⁵⁸³ IWM, 13802, 'Number of 'A IV' recruits in the reserve', 14th October 1916; TNA, CAB23/1/19, 39th War Cabinet meeting, Appendix II, 19th January 1917; TNA, WO293/6, ACI 322, 22nd February 1917 and ACI 358, 1st March 1917; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 174.

⁵⁸⁴ IWM, 13802, 'number of 'A IV' recruits in the reserve', 14th October 1916; TNA, CAB23/1/19, 39th War Cabinet meeting, Appendix II, 19th January 1917; TNA, NATS1/354, Memoranda by Geddes, 'Maintenance of the forces', 24th March 1918 and, 'The Manpower Situation, 1917-1918', 17th June 1918.

⁵⁸⁵ Archives New Zealand (ANZ), (ADI 712 9/169, Part 2), *New Zealand Expeditionary Force 1914-1918: Recruiting 1916-1918*, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/files/documents/ww1-stats/recruiting-1916-18.pdf> [last accessed 23/11/2022]; TNA, WO162/28, Recruitment area returns until 11th March 1916 and 'Prospects of Recruiting' by Macready, 31st May 1917; Granatstein, J. L and Hitsman, J. M, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 84.

at the age of 20, the growing manpower deficit led to constant changes until 1944, when youths of 18 ½ could be drafted overseas.⁵⁸⁶

Table 3.2: Proportion of different 'A' category recruits in the regular and Territorial Reserve, including the TR, 1917.⁵⁸⁷

Date	'A I'* recruits	'A II'** recruits	'A III'*** recruits	'A IV' recruits	Total	'A IV' ratio of reserve (%)
01/01/1917	50,217	81,407	60,792	35,033	227,449	15.4
29/01/1917	43,383	80,129	53,527	38,448	215,487	17.8
26/02/1917	46,128	79,214	46,455	68,167	239,964	28.4
26/03/1917	41,936	82,280	39,088	87,680	250,984	34.9
23/04/1917	42,564	87,377	37,463	101,375	268,779	37.7
21/05/1917	44,901	85,886	37,494	113,003	281,284	40.2
18/06/1917	40,412	82,750	25,745	120,820	269,727	44.8
16/07/1917	43,149	74,292	30,580	96,656	244,677	39.5
13/08/1917	32,568	71,096	24,743	99,077	227,484	43.6
10/09/1917	28,893	67,504	24,376	100,885	221,658	45.5
08/10/1917	37,081	55,425	26,362	86,028	204,896	42.0
05/11/1917	40,228	39,380	26,567	84,817	190,992	44.4
03/12/1917	44,391	28,811	25,987	128,918	228,107	56.5
31/12/1917	42,841	26,270	25,079	120,672	214,862	56.2

* 'Men available for service overseas and considered fully trained, physically and mentally fit'.

** 'Recruits who would be in 'A I' after completing training'.

*** 'Convalescents from an expeditionary force and require hardening to reach 'A I'.

Though useful from an organisational and training perspective, as the War Office could obtain a deployable reserve that could receive up to 11 months of instruction, the decision to call up youths led to a rapid intake that overwhelmed the reinforcement system. Table 3.2,

⁵⁸⁶ 1946 (Cd. 7225), *Ministry of Labour and National Service Report, 1939-1946*, pp. 8-12; Hansard, House of Commons Debate, written answer by Secretary of State for War, Sir J. Grigg, 11th July 1944, Vol. 401; Parker, H. M. D., *Manpower: A Study of War-time Policy and Administration* (London: HMSO, 1957), pp. 150-151 and 163.

⁵⁸⁷ TNA, WO114/31, Regular army returns, 1st and 29th January, 26th February and 26th March 1917; TNA, WO114/32, Regular army returns, 23rd April, 21st May, 18th June and 16th July 1917; TNA, WO114/33, Regular army and TF returns, 13th August, 10th September, 8th October, 5th November, 3rd and 31st December 1917; TNA, WO114/50, TF returns, 1st and 29th January, 26th February and 26th March 1917; TNA, WO114/51, TF returns, 23rd April, 21st May, 18th June and 16th July 1917; Macpherson, *Medical Services, General History, Vol. I*, p. 123.

which shows the proportion of different 'A' category recruits in the reinforcement system from January to December 1917, demonstrates how this decision transformed the demographic of recruits. Holding a minority of 35,033 'A IV' youths, estimated at 15.4 percent of all 'A' recruits in the reinforcement system on 1st January 1917, it almost doubled to 68,167 by 26th February. This trajectory continued until December, when 120,672 youths formed an estimated 56 percent of all 'A' personnel.

This influx overwhelmed reserve battalions and led to renewed problems with recruit distribution. The 29th TR Battalion had received 1,800 youths within five days of being repurposed in February 1917, whilst the 28th TR Battalion received over 1,000 recruits in March. It was discovered, however, that 167 youths from the latter were over the age of 18 years and seven months, and therefore should have been sent to the SR, ER or Territorial third line for the standard 14 week syllabus. Large numbers of youths were sent to these groups as well, as nearly one third of all recruits in the 2nd Thames Medway SR Brigade were classified as 'A IV'. Of more concern, however, was the arrival of these recruits in home service battalions composed of men graded 'B' or below, who protected the coast from invasion. For instance, the 2/4th Seaforth Highlanders, which patrolled and garrisoned parts of the coastline near Cromer, Norfolk, received 981 'A IV' recruits between January and March 1917.⁵⁸⁸

This disrupted training across the reserve system as Egerton feared. Designated TR battalions were overwhelmed and, akin to the recruitment spike of 1914, struggled to organise and train recruits. The remainder of the TR, as well as the SR, ER and Territorial third line, were also struggling, as they were attempting to run a 14 and 24 week training syllabus alongside each other. Some, such as the 26th TR Brigade, simply failed to implement the six month training course, whereas home defence battalions in the 60th (2nd Welsh) Division had begun to withdraw youths from training for various *ad hoc* duties, including coast patrols.⁵⁸⁹ As Egerton noted, 'I should say that their training is progressing as well as can be expected,

⁵⁸⁸ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on Dover SR Brigade, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Thames and Medway SR Brigades, 60th (2nd Welsh) Division, 62nd (2nd Highland) Division, Home Counties TF Reserve Brigade, 26th TR Brigade, 28th and 29th TR Battalions, and 227th Brigade, February-May 1917; James, E. A, *British Regiments, 1914-1918* (London: Samson Books, 1978), p. 103.

⁵⁸⁹ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on Dover SR Brigade, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Thames and Medway SR Brigades, 60th (2nd Welsh) Division, 62nd (2nd Highland) Division, Home Counties TF Reserve Brigade, 26th TR Brigade, 28th and 29th TR Battalions and 227th Brigade, February-May 1917.

but with the best instruction in the world it cannot be as good as in a complete A4 Battalion.⁵⁹⁰

Unlike previous years, when the War Office either ignored such problems or offered *ad hoc* solutions, they recognised these challenges and quickly reformed the reinforcement system. Between May and June 1917, 102 TR battalions were converted into four new types of units. This included 14 Young Soldier Battalions, 28 Graduated Battalions and 60 Junior and Senior TR Battalions, which were designed to organise and train younger and physically weaker recruits. Whilst 'A' recruits aged 18 and 8 months would continue onto the SR, ER and third line to complete the standard 14 week syllabus, with any excess to a handful of TR battalions, those younger would be channelled into Young Soldier Battalions. Divided by age across five companies, they undertook four months training before passing as a company onto one of two affiliated Graduated Battalions. Here they would complete the remainder of their training across a two month period, which included specialisms such as signalling, bombing and Lewis gunnery. Unlike previous changes, however, they would also receive youths categorised as 'B I' and 'C I' under the age of 18 years and 8 months, who were classified as fit for garrison service abroad or at home and North-Western Europe, respectively. Though the aim was to train these youths for their role in garrison units, it was hoped that six months of physical exercise would improve their health to the standard needed for frontline service. Collectively, they provided consistent and progressive training needed for proficiency and survival on the battlefield and, by October 1917, additional Young Soldier and Graduated Battalions were added.⁵⁹¹

Rather than remain part of the TR, 23 Young Soldier and 46 Graduated Battalions were assigned in groups of three to 23 regiments as their 51st, 52nd and 53rd battalions. Rather than a top down initiative to rekindle regimental affiliation, this was largely done to appease the rise in insubordination across many TR Battalions, who had discarded the general service cap badge. This had begun in July 1917 but, in October, the 202nd, 205th, 206th and 209th Graduated Battalions had begun wearing the Scottish Rifles, Royal Warwickshire, Royal West Surrey, and Royal Highlanders (Black Watch) regimental badges respectively, with the GOC

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid, Report by Egerton on 227th Brigade, 23rd May 1917.

⁵⁹¹ TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office; TNA, WO293/6, ACI 679 and 688, 26th April 1917, ACI 803, 865 and 873, 17th, 27th and 31st May 1917 and ACI 925, 12th June 1917; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 174-177 and 308.

64th Division, Major-General Herman Landon, refusing to take disciplinary action. Though these Graduated Battalions had no connection to these regiments, either through their Young Soldier Battalions or their previous regimental affiliation as Second or Local Reserve battalions, the War Office were clearly reacting to, 'the strong existing feeling against the universal-button badge' evident across the reinforcement system.⁵⁹²

Junior and Senior TR Battalions were designed to physically strengthen underdeveloped youths and adults. As mentioned in chapter two, the conscription of recruits of low medical categories for extra-regimental duties had begun in January 1916 and, from May to December 1917, 'B' and 'C' recruits represented 15 to 18 percent of all soldiers in the reinforcement system.⁵⁹³ Junior and Senior TR Battalions, however, had been created to house and train 'B II', 'B III', 'C II' and 'C III' recruits younger and older than 18 years and seven months, who could only undertake labour or sedentary work overseas or at home and North-Western Europe, respectively. Recruits were put through a six week physical training course and, based upon their progress, distributed across the army. For men that seemed likely to advance onto the category of 'A', 'B I' or 'C I', they were placed on the 14 or 24 week syllabus. Those that made insufficient progress, however, were transferred to other arms or corps where they could take up duties associated with their physical aptitude.⁵⁹⁴

Though this lessened the immediate value of the TR as a reserve to all regiments, as only two to seven percent of the TR were formed of 'A I' recruits in 1917, the proportion of 'A II' recruits had dramatically shrunk throughout 1917 due to the inability to withdraw men from industry.⁵⁹⁵ The TR had therefore started to lose its functionality as, under War Office

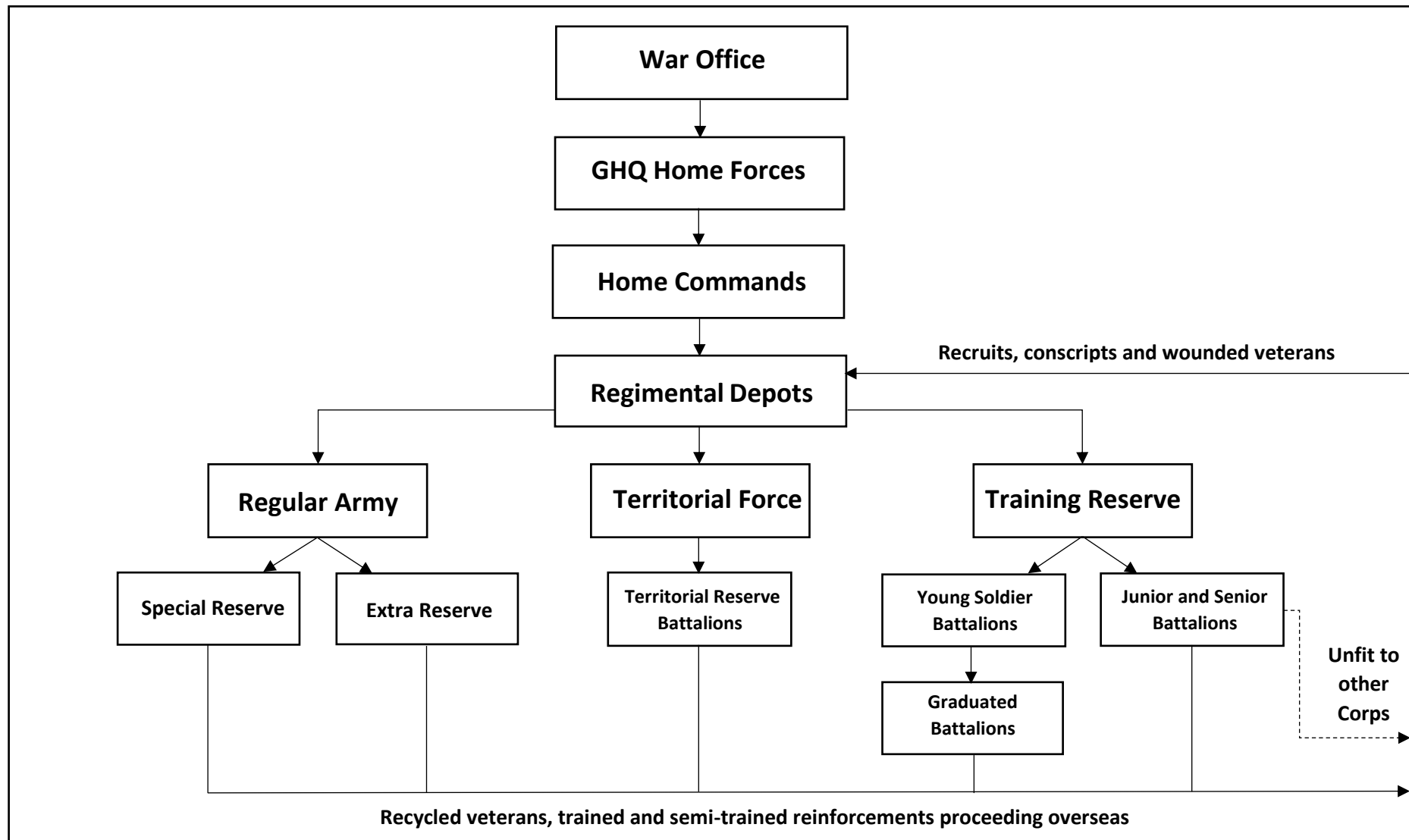
⁵⁹² IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on 72nd Division, 16-18th July 1917 and 64th Division, 10th-12th October 1917; James, *British Regiments*, pp. 46, 85, 94, 96 and 120.

⁵⁹³ TNA, WO114/31, Regular army returns, 1st and 29th January, 26th February and 26th March 1917; TNA, WO114/32, Regular army returns, 23rd April, 21st May, 18th June and 16th July 1917; TNA, WO114/33, Regular army and TF returns, 13th August, 10th September, 8th October, 5th November, 3rd and 31st December 1917; TNA, WO114/50, TF returns, 1st and 29th January, 26th February and 26th March 1917; TNA, WO114/51, TF returns, 23rd April, 21st May, 18th June and 16th July 1917.

⁵⁹⁴ TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office; TNA, WO293/6, ACI 679 and 688, 26th April 1917, ACI 803, 865 and 873, 17th, 27th and 31st May 1917 and ACI 925, 12th June 1917; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 174-177 and 308.

⁵⁹⁵ TNA, WO114/31, Regular army returns, 1st and 29th January, 26th February and 26th March 1917; TNA, WO114/32, Regular army return, 23rd April, 21st May, 18th June and 16th July 1917; TNA, WO114/33, Regular Army and TF returns, 13th August, 10th September, 8th October, 5th November, 3rd and 31st December 1917; TNA, WO114/50, TF returns, 1st and 29th January, 26th February and 26th March 1917; TNA, WO114/51, TF returns, 23rd April, 21st May, 18th June and 16th July 1917.

Figure 3.1: Reinforcement System in the United Kingdom, May - October 1917



policy, they only received manpower once regimental reserves were full. Thus, the decision to redesign the TR, from a general reserve to one that provided training and physical strengthening to underaged and unfit recruits, demonstrated considerable insight and flexibility by military authorities. They adapted to the uncertainties experienced in manpower supply, as well as the changing demographic and health of recruits, to increase the output of trained soldiers for all regiments.

Despite the benefits these reforms promised, results were somewhat lacklustre. As outlined in chapter two, there were four criterion that had to be achieved to create a consistent turnover of trained personnel. This included the steady supply of raw recruits, the adequate provision of equipment and training infrastructure, a stable corps of trained instructors under competent leadership, and the recognition of reserve battalions as solely training formations. Unlike the chaos of 1914 to 1916, the steady supply of raw recruits, the provision of equipment, training infrastructure and competent COs, were not serious issues for Young Soldier and Graduated Battalions throughout 1917 and 1918. The influx of 'A IV' recruits, estimated at 10,000 a month, ensured reserve battalions had access to raw recruits, whilst there was an upsurge in the creation of training facilities across the UK, including assault courses, bombing cages and miniature ranges with fire trenches. Though some problems were raised by Egerton, such as the need to replace 'tired' COs, these were limited and often balanced by recommendations to maintain outstanding officers near the end of their tenure.⁵⁹⁶

The other two criterion were not met however, which undermined the benefits offered by these structural reforms. The primary problem was the inability to create a strong and stable cohort of NCO and officer instructors between 1917 and 1918. Despite the rationalisation of the reinforcement system in September 1916, which had consolidated the pool of instructors and selected the best for training recruits, the War Office undermined this in January 1917 by drafting overseas all 'A' graded officers and NCOs who had been in the reserve for six months. Though the BEF was in desperate need of reinforcements and the turnover of NCOs had been consistent beforehand, this decision led to the mass exodus of

⁵⁹⁶ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on 26th TR Brigade, 3rd-6th October, SR Dover Brigade, 25th May 1917 and 72nd Division, 4th-7th December 1917; TNA, NATS1/354, 'Problem of the Maintenance of the Armed Forces' by Geddes, November 1917.

experienced instructors. The 3rd TR battalion estimated that two-thirds of its instructional staff had become liable for drafting and, though they were allowed to retain them for an additional three months, others were less fortunate. The 26th TR Brigade, who were already short of its establishment by 69 officers and 168 NCOs, feared the loss of another 29 officers and 199 NCOs. Whilst their situation had improved by May, as the brigade had rapidly trained NCOs to replace those drafted, this system guaranteed that the best instructors were never retained for training reinforcements.⁵⁹⁷

Though a serious issue for all reserve battalions, Egerton argued this loss was acute for Young Soldier and Graduated Battalions, as they needed a strong contingent of suitable officers and NCOs, who were fit and of the right temperament to instruct and discipline youths. These views were widely shared, as they were echoed during the Second World War when Young Soldier Battalions were re-established for home defence in 1940. As GOC-in-Chief Eastern Command, General Sir Guy Williams, told the War Office, well-trained and reliable NCOs, as well as platoon commanders who were, 'capable of leading and influencing these young soldiers', were essential to the success of these battalions. Egerton had emphasised similar points in 1917 and proposed two measures to ensure this. Firstly, he recommended that junior NCOs, who transition from 'A IV' to 'A I' in Young Soldier and Graduated Battalions, should be temporarily retained due to the difficulties of finding, training, and promoting suitable young men. Secondly, the War Office should undertake a full review of all home service NCOs and redistribute them across the reserve to ensure youths received the, 'very best and most athletic officers' available for instruction.⁵⁹⁸

The War Office ignored these warnings, however. They continued to comb out fit officers and NCOs for the remainder of the war, which led to a constant turnover of instructors that disrupted the continuity of training. Though Schools of Instruction across Home Commands provided specialist training for new instructors, and were generally well reported on, reserve battalions were reliant upon an increasingly smaller, unstable, and medically unfit cohort of officers and NCOs.⁵⁹⁹ In August 1917, the 255th Graduated Battalion were behind in

⁵⁹⁷ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on 26th TR Brigade, 26th January 1917 and 29th TR Battalion, 25th May 1917; TNA, WO95/5460, 3rd TR Battalion regimental digest; TNA, WO293/6, ACI 45, 8th January 1917.

⁵⁹⁸ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on 7th TR Brigade, 14th June 1917, 64th Division, 10-12th October 1917 and 72nd Division, 8-10th August and 4th-7th December 1917; TNA, WO32/9727, Report on formation of Young Soldier Battalions by General Sir Guy Williams, November 1940.

⁵⁹⁹ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on Schools of instruction, 1917-1918.

their training, as only one of its five companies had fired the General Musketry Course. Despite the CO, Lieutenant-Colonel Jeffrey, being a, 'young and energetic Regular officer, [who] is enthusiastic about the young men of his battalion... he was hampered in training, by some of the light-duty and home service officers and NCOs.' A proportion of the latter were 'C III' and only fit for sedentary work, whilst others were convalescents who were incapable of providing the rigorous training needed by underdeveloped youths. This was not unique, as one company in the 270th Graduated Battalion had yet to fire parts of the musketry course, use live bombs, or be exposed to gas, as they only had 3 sergeants to instruct 165 youths. In other cases, newly appointed staff were totally unsuited for their position. For instance, the 52nd Welsh Regiment received two unknown captains from pioneer battalions who, upon arrival, needed to undergo basic infantry training themselves before they could take up their appointments as company commanders.⁶⁰⁰ Though the War Office had pursued this in the name of manpower efficiency, they had sacrificed the proficiency of the training system to achieve it.

These difficulties were universal, but they placed a disproportionate pressure on Graduated Battalions, as they could only provide specialist instruction to recruits if Young Soldier Battalions had covered their syllabus. On multiple occasions, however, companies were sent on with inadequate training, which forced Graduated Battalions to repeat basic instruction. For example, the 205th Graduated Battalion received a company that had no knowledge of extended order or rapid fire, whilst those being fed into the 51st Bedfordshire, 52nd Royal Sussex and 52nd Middlesex Regiments, had not completed their gas or musketry training. Though greater communication between the COs of Young Soldier and Graduated Battalions could have alleviated these issues, it was rare. In one case, the 51st Leicestershire Battalion was forbidden to contact its feeder unit, the 53rd Leicestershire Battalion, in Southern Command, as the latter had prohibited all contact with units outside the Home Command.⁶⁰¹

The War Office also failed to recognise Graduated Battalions as solely training formations, as they were incorporated into home defence divisions from July 1917. Though

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid, Reports by Egerton on 68th Division, January 1918 and 72nd Division, 8-10th August, 4th-7th December 1917 and 16th-18th July 1918.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid, Reports by Egerton on 64th Division, 10th-12th October 1917, 71st Division, 11th-13th December 1917 and 72nd Division, 4-7th December 1917.

this created manpower economies which, as will be discussed later, repurposed the personnel of 46 home defence battalions, Graduated Battalions could not balance these competing demands.⁶⁰² In August, the 52nd Manchester Regiment had been tasked with patrolling 16 miles of the Suffolk coastline, whilst the 51st South Wales Borderers had to create and maintain coastal defences, with three of its five companies 'holding the line' at all times throughout the winter. Only the most junior and senior companies in the 51st South Wales Borderers had been retained to complete their eight week syllabus, whilst those on the coast undertook training when circumstances allowed. Though Egerton believed the former would 'pass muster' at the IBD in France, the others would not reach the standard of training outlined in the training syllabus. This, in turn, led to delays on the Western Front, as inefficient drafts had to undergo remedial training at IBDs. As chapter six will demonstrate, this underpinned the latter's expansion as training centres between 1915 and 1917.⁶⁰³

This was exacerbated by regimental depots, which continued to distribute 'A IV' recruits across the reinforcement system. For instance, the 222nd Brigade, which undertook coastal defence duties and was composed of mostly 'C' men, had 240 'A IV' recruits sent to them in September 1917. Not only was it an insufficient number to form a single training company, as they were separated across four battalions, but the inferior status of low-tier home defence units left them without suitable instructors, training infrastructure or equipment. As Egerton notes, they, as well as all other 'A' recruits, should be sent to the reinforcement system, as, 'a mixed Brigade cannot however hard it works, put the necessary final polish on any draft that it sends outs. In this brigade formation there is not a single Lewis Gun [Original Emphasis].' Instances of arrival continued into 1918 and demonstrates a failure by Home Commands and the War Office to impose some sort of control over the distribution of recruits by regimental depots. It undermined the important role attached to Young Soldier and Graduated Battalions and, as Egerton lamented in January 1918, 'it is almost a sin to leave a healthy young fellow this age in these coast defence units.'⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰² TNA, WO32/11284, 'The Personnel employed with the Army in Great Britain, with special reference to a detailed review of particular establishments through the Kingdom' by Lieutenant-General H. M. Lawson, 12th March 1917; TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 177.

⁶⁰³ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on 68th Division, 28th-30th August 1917 and January 1918.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid, Reports by Egerton on 226th Brigade, 27-28th September 1917 and 68th Division, January 1918.

The regimental reserves, including the SR, ER and third line, also began to receive large numbers of 'A IV' recruits. This policy had been officially sanctioned by the Army Council, however, due to the decline in recruits over the age of 19, as they were mostly employed in protected industries. Categorised as 'A II', there was relative stability in the proportion of these recruits across the reserve until the summer of 1917, as the shortfall in recruitment had been balanced by combing out soldiers from different arms and corps. This source had been depleted by August 1917, however, which led to a sharp drop in 'A II' recruits across regimental reserves. Numbering 67,710, or 47.5 percent, of all 'A' category men in the SR, ER and third line in August 1917, it fell to a mere 24,077, or 17.1 percent, by December.⁶⁰⁵

This led to difficulties at the regimental level, as reserve battalions lacked the resources needed to implement four separate training programmes. Whilst the small number of 'A II' recruits would need to undertake the 14 week syllabus, 'A IV' recruits needed to complete the 24 week course. Even then, however, a large proportion of 'A IV' recruits were drawn from Junior TR Battalions, who had already undertaken a six month training period. Whilst they needed a concise programme of advance training, regimental reserves also accommodated 'A III' soldiers, who were wounded veterans that required graduated exercises and refresher training. Though many were sent onto Command Depots, which had developed an excellent reputation for rehabilitating soldiers through medical treatment and progressive training, a proportion of permanently unfit soldiers were temporarily housed at regimental reserves. Despite their small numbers, there were fears that they had an adverse effect on the psychology and morale of youths, who repeatedly saw the arrival and discharge of disabled serviceman 'broken by war'.⁶⁰⁶

Collectively, this undermined the efficiency of regimental reserves and led to significant discrepancies. For instance, the 5th King's Royal Rifle Corps was classed as a first-rate reserve battalion; it provided 56, rather than the mandatory 24, hours of Lewis gun

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid, Reports by Egerton on 1st and 3rd Thames and Medway SR Brigades, 9th and 13th July 1917; TNA, WO114/31, Regular army returns, 1st and 29th January, 26th February and 26th March 1917; TNA, WO114/32, Regular army returns, 23rd April, 21st May, 18th June and 16th July 1917; TNA, WO114/33, Regular army and TF returns, 13th August, 10th September, 8th October, 5th November, 3rd and 31st December 1917; TNA, WO114/50, TF returns, 1st and 29th January, 26th February and 26th March 1917; TNA, WO114/51, TF returns, 23rd April, 21st May, 18th June and 16th July 1917; TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office.

⁶⁰⁶ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on Eastern Command Depot, 29th June 1917 and Thames and Medway SR Brigade, 9th November 1917; TNA, WO32/11284, 'The Personnel employed with the Army in Great Britain' by Lawson, 24th October 1918.

training to all 'A IV' recruits, as well as other key skills, including map reading and scouting. In contrast, the Felixstowe SR Brigade struggled to implement multiple courses and, as a result, defaulted on their role to provide advance training to youths. Instead, they restarted the training syllabus at week 10, despite the fact that most had already received six to eight months of training at Junior TR Battalions. This was a common theme however and, in the Home Counties TF Reserve Brigade, recruits were confined to training on the barracks square, which equated to the first two weeks of the training syllabus. As Egerton commented, this was a significant duplication of effort and 'utterly disheartening' for recruits. It undermined the point of progressive training encapsulated within the reforms and simply wasted time that was needed for specialist or advanced training.⁶⁰⁷

Though this level of inconsistency had affected Junior and Senior TR Battalions, their strength had declined since their creation.⁶⁰⁸ The 109th TR Battalion, which was formed into a senior TR unit, had dropped from a peak strength of 1,257 all ranks in June to 667 in November. As before, this was due to regimental depots, who indiscriminately distributed 'B' and 'C' category recruits across the reinforcement system. For instance, the majority of the 237 recruits in the 3rd Royal Sussex Regiment were classified as 'B' and 'C' category men in August 1917. As a result of this decline, the War Office decided to economise on this process by disbanding all Junior and Senior TR Battalions, bar one in each Home Command, in November 1917. The remainder, alongside four kept in Northern Command as training battalions for the MGC, were to be reorganised into larger reception depots named Recruit Distribution Battalions. Like their predecessor, they were to provide specialised physical training to all recruits classified as 'B II' and 'B III', which, from October 1917, included previous definitions held in 'C II and 'C III'. The economy of this policy was evident, as NCOs, which were in desperate demand throughout the Great War, were redistributed. Upon disbandment, the 109th TR Battalion transferred 10 NCOs to France, 40 to the 5th King's Royal Rifle Corps and another 25 to 3/16th London Regiment (Queen's Westminster Rifles). This example also shows the continued importance of regimental affiliations, as the 109th TR Battalion had previously been the 19th (Reserve) King's Royal Rifle Corps. Even though the TR

⁶⁰⁷ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on Home Counties TF Reserve Brigade, 26th September 1917, Felixstowe SR Brigade, 26-29th October 1917, Thames and Medway SR Brigade, 9th November 1917 and 2nd Thames and Medway SR Brigade, March 1918.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid, Reports by Egerton on 26th TR Brigade, 4th September, 7th TR Brigade, 3rd-6th October 1917 and 1st and 2nd Thames Medway SR Brigades, 8th-15th November 1917.

was accused of 'nationalising' the army, it is evident that regimental affiliations and groupings guided drafting and transfers until late 1917.⁶⁰⁹

Yet, these battalions remained underutilised, as recruits of low medical categories continued to be sent onto depleted regimental reserves, including the 800 'B II' and 'B III' soldiers that were reported as 'choking up' the 5th Royal Fusiliers in February 1918. As a result, Recruit Distributing Battalions tended to receive men of extremely poor health and physique who were of questionable value. The newly appointed Commander-in-Chief Home Forces, Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, was appalled at the 'ridiculous recruits' being sent to No. 7 Recruit Distribution Battalion in August 1918, as many, 'can never possibly make soldiers, and ought not to have been taken.'⁶¹⁰ Out of 9,000 recruits put under the Recruit Distribution Battalion's training regime, which equated to roughly 20 percent of all personnel provided by the MNS in 1918, only 1,184 and 2,269 men, or 13.2 and 25.2 percent, were upgraded to 'A I' and 'B I' respectively. Attempts to improve this by transferring across 2,000 soldiers from other arms failed as only 94 and 323, or 4.7 and 16.2 percent, achieved an 'A I' or 'B I' category. Despite these great efforts and the decision to draft 'B I' and 'B II' recruits overseas after the German Spring Offensive in 1918, 61.6 percent of recruits were eventually rejected for overseas service. Though the MNS attempted to supply the army with as many recruits as possible, the majority of these men should have remained within industry.⁶¹¹

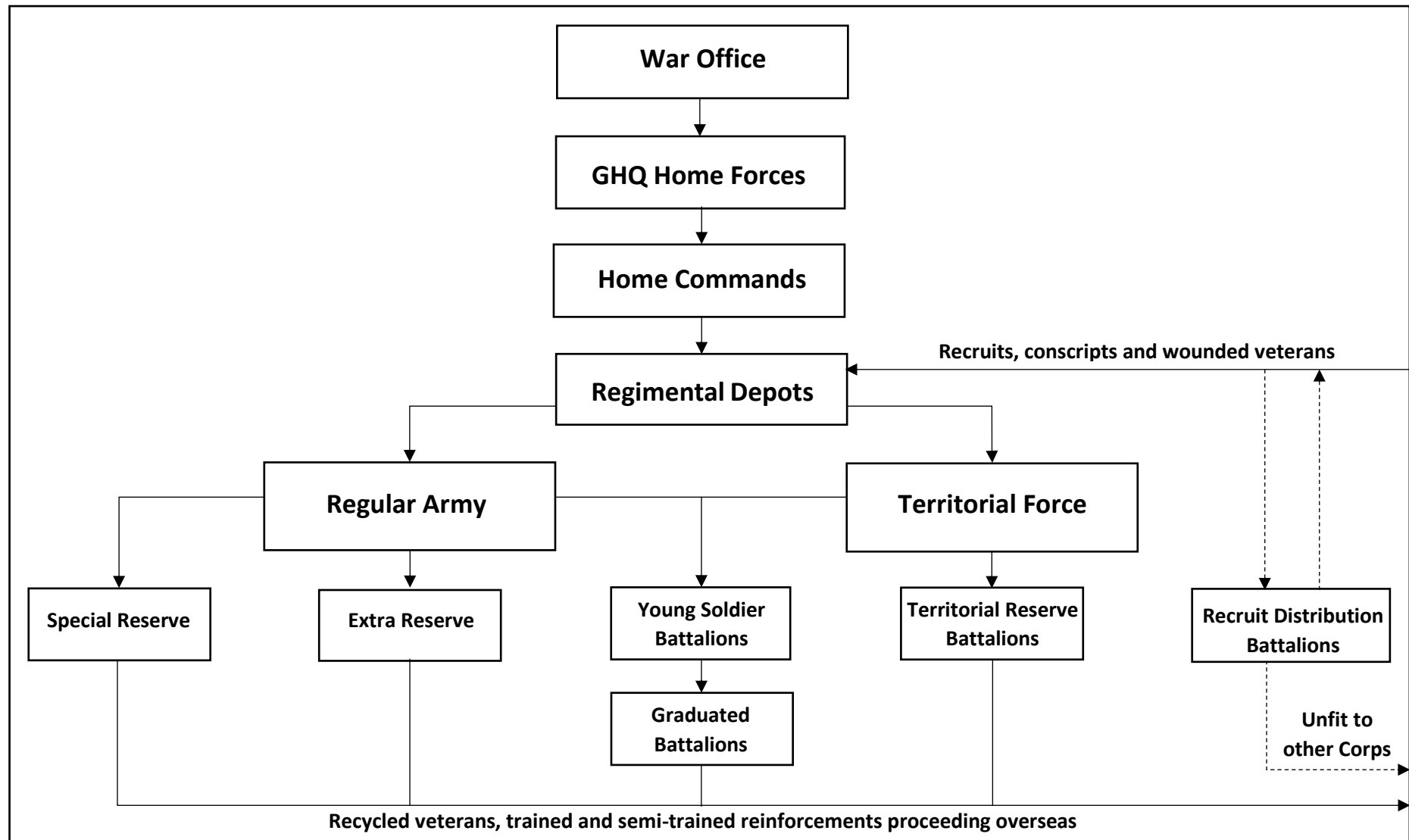
One unexpected problem to emerge was the need to handle youths who had returned home after serving overseas. Despite regulations stating recruits could only serve overseas from the age of 19, many were accepted when the New Armies were created. Though some were withdrawn upon discovery, many parents did not see this as a prominent issue, as adolescents could leave school and enter the workforce from the age of 12. Others found it difficult to remove their child who had already enlisted, as there was ambiguity surrounding

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid, Report by Egerton on 3rd Royal Sussex Regiment, 2nd August 1917; Hampshire Record Office (HRO), The Royal Green Jackets Regimental Archive Collection (TRGJRA), 170A12W/D/3636-3637, History of 109th TR Battalion, June-December 1917; TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 214 and 308.

⁶¹⁰ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on 1st Dover SR Brigade, 1st February 1918; LHCMA, Robertson 5/1, Report on Northern Command by Robertson, August 1918; TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office.

⁶¹¹ TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office.

Figure 3.2: Reinforcement System in the United Kingdom, November 1917 – November 1918



the official process until the War Office outlined definitive guidelines in 1916. Even then, some youths resisted their parents or guardians, and threatened to re-enlist under a false name if forcibly brought home.⁶¹²

Nevertheless, with stricter measures in place due to conscription, the War Office announced the various methods of handling youths in June 1916. Whilst those within the UK were discharged if 16 and under, transferred to the reserve if 17, or sent to the reinforcement system if 18, those abroad had two options. If 17 and younger, they were to be sent home and, if willing, discharged or transferred to the reserve. Anyone older than 18 but under 19 were kept overseas and trained under local arrangements. Though detailed, it provided a loophole to underaged soldiers who wished to remain in the military, as they could not be removed if they withheld their consent. Therefore, soldiers under 18 and, at times, under 19, trickled back to the UK and were stationed across the reinforcement system until they reached the appropriate age.⁶¹³

This led to large clusters of underaged soldiers emerging across reserve battalions. For instance, 341 repatriated youths were sent to the Home Counties TF Reserve Brigade in May 1917, whilst 400 were used by the 2/4th and 2/5th Royal Welsh Fusiliers for home defence in August. Yet, Egerton recorded the need for some sort of special organisation, as many of these youths, who had been overseas since 16, accrued over 18 months experience and been wounded several times, were being mixed with raw recruits upon their return. This had led to disciplinary and training problems, as new recruits needed leaner discipline and gradual training to build confidence, skill, and physical strength, whilst those who had returned from overseas needed firm guidance and instruction from senior NCOs. Discipline, he argued, had already begun to break down in certain units because of this and some, such as the 24th TR Battalion, had seen a surge in minor military crimes such as unauthorised absences. Though some innovative solutions were implemented to resolve this, including the Home Counties TF Reserve Brigade's decision to supply 120 of these youths as NCOs to Young Soldier and Graduated Battalions, the War Office deemed this a non-issue. Disciplinary problems

⁶¹² Cook, Tim, "“He was determined to go”: Underage Soldiers in the Canadian Expeditionary Force', *Social History*, 41:81 (2008), pp. 51 and 60; Simkins, Peter, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies, 1914-1916* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 180-184; van Emden, *Boy Soldiers of the Great War*, pp.172-191 and 313-321.

⁶¹³ TNA, WO293/4, ACI 1186, 12th June 1916; van Emden, *Boy Soldiers of the Great War*, pp. 190-192.

continued to rise in selected units and, as a temporary solution, many were pigeonholed into composite companies used at officer schools. Yet, as Egerton reported in March 1918, the large number of repatriated youths over 18 years and 9 months at the 2nd Officer's School was unacceptable. While discipline had improved as most were used to provide junior officers with drilling practice, these youths should have been in the SR to complete their advanced training. Nevertheless, the War Office simply ignored these difficulties and squandered the opportunities these youths presented.⁶¹⁴

Overall, this adds clarity to the ongoing debate between contemporaries and scholars over the British Army's reliance on young men throughout 1918. For instance, Jonathan Boff and Hine have attempted to moderate the allegations of the Official Historian, James Edmond, who complained about the 'abnormal' proportion of 'boys' under the age of 20 throughout 1918. They do this through an analysis of casualty data, which demonstrates that the average age of soldiers on the Western Front was 26. Though the number of men under 21 rose to its highest proportion in 1918, there was stability across various age groups, including 25 to 29 year olds.⁶¹⁵ Though convincing, casualty data cannot reflect the sudden change in the demographic of recruits at home, as the age of reinforcements took time to change the overall composition of formations overseas. Therefore, considering that 56.5 percent of the reserve in December 1917 was formed of soldiers under the age of 19, contemporary comments were close to the mark. The BEF may have not been primarily composed of young soldiers by November 1918, but a large proportion of the reinforcements it received were.

Whilst the enlistment, organisation and training of youths was seemingly a British problem, as it was the only nation in the British Empire to conscript youths of 18 years, the CEF faced similar challenges. Though volunteers could not serve overseas until the age of 19, and men were not conscripted until the age of 20 under the Canadian Military Service Act of August 1917, Tim Cook estimates that 20,000 or more youths had falsified their age to serve

⁶¹⁴ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on 4th TR Brigade, March and 6-7th September 1917, Home Counties TF Reserve Brigade, 30th-31st May 1917, Artists Rifles OTC, 19-20th June 1917, 68th (2nd Welsh) Division, 28th-30th August 1917, Thames Medway SR Brigade, 9th November 1917, 2nd Officers School, Eastern Command, 12th March 1918 and 67th Division, 10-11th April 1918.

⁶¹⁵ Boff, Jonathan, *Winning and Losing on the Western Front: The British Third Army and the defeat of Germany in 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 53-58; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 234, 239-240, 251-252, 259-263, 272-273, 278-281, 292 and 298.

overseas. Though a proportion were discovered and retained in the UK, with adolescents younger than 16 years and 6 months repatriated to Canada from January 1917, thousands made it to the Canadian Corps overseas. Similar to Kitchener in the UK, this was caused by the Minister of Militia and Defence, Sir Samuel Hughes', chaotic recruitment policies between 1914 and 1916, as well as COs who turned a blind eye to the youths in their ranks.⁶¹⁶

The new Ministry of OMFC, which symbolised the radical transformation of Canadian administration in the UK throughout 1917, took this problem seriously.⁶¹⁷ It applied greater pressure onto the Canadian Corps to follow British policy and, due to ongoing difficulties of compliance, the Canadian Adjutant General, Major-General P. E. Thacker, ordered all units in October 1917 to withdraw soldiers on the frontline if a parent or guardian reported them as underage. Though some COs feared soldiers may encourage their family to falsify claims in order to evade active service, as it took time to verify their age through official channels, this led to the withdrawal of youths to the UK or Lines of Communication in France.⁶¹⁸

These efforts were not replicated in the UK however, as the OMFC failed to create an organisation to handle and train youths. As Table 3.3 demonstrates, there was an estimated 5,843 youths aged 18 and under across the UK. Unlike the War Office, however, the OMFC had no clear policy regarding their organisation until July 1917 and, with no clear idea about how to resolve the issue, defaulted onto imperial methods. Though the 34th Canadian Battalion was designated a 'Boys Battalion' from December 1916, it only held 800 youths under 18. Most continued to be spread across the UK and, according to OMFC instructions, youths aged 17 and below were to be sent to the 5th Canadian Division, whilst those aged 18 should be posted to reserve units. Even this caused confusion, as Shoreham Command had received five different sets of contradictory orders regarding the organisation of youths in February 1917. As one administrative report noted in March, 'there is no question that there is great conflict of instructions on file in all [Canadian] commands at the present time as to

⁶¹⁶ Library and Archive Canada (LAC), RG9-III, Vol. 2859, files 11-33, Correspondence regarding underage soldiers, 1917-1918; Cook, "He was determined to go", pp. 41-63 and 71-72.

⁶¹⁷ Morton, Desmond, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada's Overseas Ministry in the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), pp. 86-126.

⁶¹⁸ LAC, RG9-III, Vol. 2859, files 11-33, Correspondence regarding underage soldiers, 1917-1918; Cook, "He was determined to go", pp. 60-63.

the disposal of minors'. As a result, thousands of youths remained scattered, and often in the wrong place, across various parts of the Canadian reinforcement system.⁶¹⁹

Table 3.3: Number of underaged Canadian soldiers in the UK, January 1917.⁶²⁰

Military Camps	15 years and under	16 years	17 years	18 years	Total
Shoreham	94	349	446	412	1,601
Shorncliffe	9	35	121	807	972
Witley	53	151	597	581	1,382
Bramshott	12	46	248	850	1,156
Hastings	3	361	86	176	296
Crowborough	2	12	18	28	60
Seaford	16	68	177	415	876
Total	189	962	1,693	3,269	5,843

Whilst this undermined the concept of a 'Boys Battalion', the 34th Canadian Battalion itself failed to provide training to youths, who were regularly placed on fatigues. This undermined their physical development and though a series of recommendations were made in January 1917, including the establishment of a proper system of training that developed their strength, the battalion was disbanded in March. Without any clear ideas about how to resolve the issue, it appears the OMFC ignored the problem until the War Office provided a solution through the creation of Young Soldier Battalions in June. Formed in July 1917 at Bexhill Military Camp, the Canadian Young Soldier Battalion was designed to house and train all underaged soldiers between the age of 17 and 18 ½.⁶²¹

Though an improvement, its impact was limited. The total strength of the battalion never rose above 1,000, despite the fact that there were over 5,000 youths in January 1917 and many, such as the 568 found between October and December 1917, continued to arrive in drafts from Canada. This was due to the transfer orders issued in June and July, which

⁶¹⁹ LAC, RG9-III, Vol. 2859, files 11-33, Letter from Shoreham Command to OMFC, 27th February 1917 and 'A Branch' report on organisations of youths, 7th March 1917; LAC, RG9-III, Vol. 2893, files 160-33, orders and memoranda on establishment of 34th Canadian Battalion, November 1916; Cook, "He was determined to go", p. 63.

⁶²⁰ LAC, RG9-III, Vol. 2893, files 160-33, Chart on number of boys under 18 across all military camps, [ND] c. January 1917.

⁶²¹ Ibid, Report on 34th Canadian Battalion by Captain F. P. Wallbridge, 25th January 1917, and telegram from Adjutant General Canadians to GOC Canadian Troops Shoreham, 28th March 1917; Cook, "He was determined to go", p. 63.

excluded all youths that were part of a permanent establishment. This included the 5th Canadian Division and, upon the creation of the Canadian Young Soldier Battalion, an officer from the Canadian Training School was sent to inspect the remaining youths for selection. Even if this order reflected the need to pick youths based upon their physical health, the number selected was clearly limited to the establishment of one Young Soldier battalion. Despite further reorganisation of underaged soldiers throughout 1917 and 1918, most were transferred to other arms, including the Canadian Army Medical Corps and forestry battalions. This did free up older 'A' men for service overseas, but the majority of youths were unlikely to have received the extended, specialist training provided to their British counterparts. Though the War Office had to deal with several ongoing issues and were forced into action due to the scale of the demographic change experienced, they were much quicker to organise and train youths. Canadian 'solutions' lacked forethought and effectively ignored the problem until the armistice made it irrelevant.⁶²²

Despite the creation of Britain's first strategic manpower policy, it was dislocated by the opening of the German Spring Offensive on 21st March 1918. Under the cover of an overwhelming artillery bombardment of 10,000 guns, 76 German Divisions overran Fifth, and later Third, Army on the Western Front. As will be discussed in chapter five, the BEF was pushed into a retreat that threatened to separate the British and French armies from one another. Though staunch British resistance and high German casualties led to a temporary pause in operations from the end of March, pressure rose to a crescendo during mid-April when the BEF, in a state of flux from extensive casualties, was pushed to the brink of collapse during Operation Georgette. The BEF sustained 236,300 casualties throughout this period and though the remainder of German operations, launched between May and July, were directed against the French Army, IX Corps suffered extensive losses during Operation Blücher in late May. As part of the *roulement* scheme, which used tired British formations to relieve fresh French divisions on quiet parts of the line, the depleted 8th, 21st, 25th, and 50th (Northumberland) divisions bore the brunt of the German assault near the Aisne River and suffered a staggering 28,703 casualties.⁶²³

⁶²² LAC, RG9-III, Vol. 2893, files 160-33, Correspondence regarding creation of Canadian Young Soldier Battalion, June-August 1917; Cook, "He was determined to go", pp. 64-67.

⁶²³ Beckett, Bowman and Connolly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 354-360; Edmonds, J. E., *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. II* (London: Macmillan, 1937), p. 490; Greenhalgh,

Between March and June, military and political authorities undertook unprecedented action to provide immediate reinforcements and a renewed stream of recruits for the BEF. Taking stock of all available sources of manpower between 23rd to 25th March, once the full scale of the crisis had become known in the UK, the War Cabinet and War Office made a series of important decisions that maximised the flow of manpower overseas. Firstly, the War Office redirected all reinforcements from other theatres to France and outlined a variety of modest sources that could be used, including 5,000 specialists and 5,000 officer cadets in training. Soldiers were to be withdrawn from home defence and, though this will be discussed below, initially drew upon the garrison in Ireland. The War Office also reduced the standard of eyesight tests, which would artificially generate more 'A' graded recruits. Despite the possibility of gaining more recruits via an alteration of medical procedures, the Minister of National Service, Sir Auckland Geddes, rejected the idea of re-examining men previously discharged. Not only would it be difficult to impose, as there had been widespread social and political resistance to the Military Service (Review of Exemptions) Act, 1917, but it was estimated that no more than one percent would be available for active service. Geddes and the War Cabinet did, however, agree to conscript Russian nationals and draft them, as well as Conscientious Objectors, to labour battalions overseas. This was in addition to the suspension of recruitment for the Royal Navy and the possible withdrawal of Marines from vessels. Nevertheless, the Admiralty rebuffed the latter attempt and, after releasing 900 Marines by 29th March, claimed no more could be freed without undermining the efficiency of the Grand Fleet. Though the CIGS, General Sir Henry Wilson, argued everyone should 'thin their line' in the current crisis, the War Cabinet refused to overrule the Admiralty.⁶²⁴

Three key sources were tapped, however. Firstly, all soldiers on leave in the UK, estimated at 88,000, were to be immediately returned to their battalions. Though this raises the question of why so many soldiers were on leave at a time of imminent threat, their swift return was essential. Secondly, 27,000 munition workers, who were soldiers allocated to 'Reserve W' in the UK, were recalled. Though the latter had been created in October 1916 to

Elizabeth, *Foch in Command: The Forging of a First World War General* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 343-344.

⁶²⁴ TNA, CAB23/5/63, 64 and 69, 371st, 372nd and 377th War Cabinet meetings, 23rd, 25th and 29th March 1918; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 228.

accommodate all skilled men, who had been discharged from the armed forces or transferred to the reserve upon conscription, 27,000 had been specially enlisted by the Ministry of Munitions from 1915. Unlike reservists, however, they still came under military discipline and were liable for further service in an emergency. Though the War Office had failed to keep track of this floating population and had, as late as 9th March 1918, requested the discharge of men not graded 'A', the War Cabinet agreed to immediately release them. Despite some resistance from the Minister of Munitions, Sir Winston Churchill, who warned of the impact this would have on industrial output, he was overruled. Yet very few made it overseas. Though reserve units, such as the 1st TR Brigade, received, examined, and distributed 493 and 541 'W Reservists' from munition and mining firms respectively by mid-May, the War Office reported that 21,000, or 77.8 percent of this group, were still employed by the Ministry of Munitions in June. Notwithstanding this failure, it must be noted that many of these soldiers had been withdrawn from the army since 1915, some from second line territorial battalions, and may not have been 'A' grade.⁶²⁵

Lastly, the government lowered the age of overseas service from 19 years to 18 ½, which enabled the War Office to draw upon an estimated 50,000 youths across Graduated Battalions. Though Grieves has shown this as an unprecedented measure, this group had, as discussed, been forged into an emergency manpower pool by the Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Sir Nevil Macready, in January 1917. Discounting the 88,000 men on leave, who were not reinforcements per se, young soldiers formed 61 percent of the remaining 82,000 reinforcements immediately available for the Western Front. Unlike 'W Reservists', most had proceeded overseas within the month, as the number of 'A IV' recruits in the reinforcement system had sharply declined from 117,056 in March to 61,446 in April.⁶²⁶

This did, however, cause problems in the carefully calibrated reinforcement system. It took time to call up and administratively process youths, whilst physical strengthening and training had been carefully planned across a six month syllabus in Young Soldier and Graduate

⁶²⁵ TNA, CAB23/5/63, 371st War Cabinet meeting, 23rd March 1918; TNA, NATS1/486, Memoranda on release of soldiers in munitions, January-March 1918; TNA, WO95/5459, 1st TR Brigade war diary, 28th April 1918; TNA, WO95/5464, 2/7th Cheshire Regiment war diary, October 1915; TNA, WO114/35, Regular army and TF return, 24th June 1918; Beckett, Bowman and Connolly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 349.

⁶²⁶ TNA, CAB23/5/63, 371st War Cabinet meeting, 23rd March 1918; TNA, WO114/34, Regular army and TF returns, 25th March and 22nd April 1918; Grieves, *The Politics of Manpower*, pp. 184-185; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 228; Woodward, 'Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army', p. 251.

Battalions. Most specialist and advanced training did not take place until the fifth month and, considering most recruits did not enter the reinforcement system until they were aged 18 years and one month, most were at, or near to, the new drafting age before undertaking this at Graduated Battalions. Though the Inspector-General of the Infantry, Major-General G. A. Egerton, recommended the immediate adoption of the 14 week syllabus for all recruits in April 1918, he noted the inevitability that youths were drafted overseas with insufficient training. For example, a draft of 187 young soldiers from the 67th Division, who were aged 18 ½, had yet to train with a Lewis gun. In another case, 40 recruits, who had just arrived at the 52nd Rifle Brigade from their Young Soldier Battalion, were immediately drafted. This, in turn, led to confusion regarding the advancement of companies from Young Soldier to Graduate Battalions, with many being forwarded on as soon as vacancies appeared in the latter. This disrupted basic training and, in the 51st Hampshire Regiment and 51st King's Royal Rifle Corps, there was a large influx of poorly trained youths who were fast approaching the new drafting age. Though this caused consternation with many COs, especially those who felt it was morally wrong to rapidly accelerate the training of these underdeveloped youths, Egerton correctly argued that this decision, though regrettable, was absolutely necessary. Despite these difficulties, which lasted until August when the age for active service was raised back up to 19, Macready's decision in January 1917 demonstrated extraordinary foresight. Without it, it is probable that the BEF would have collapsed during the German Spring Offensive.⁶²⁷

Though the Army Council demanded immediate action on 29th March to rectify a predicted deficit of 282,000, the War Cabinet had already charged Geddes to secure additional manpower for the British Army.⁶²⁸ Indeed, he had outlined his preliminary thoughts on 24th March and provided a quota of 200,000 men, aged over 18 years and eight months, to be combed out of various industries across the country. Though this allocation was consistently updated between March and June due to multiple reasons, including industrial output and organised labour, the official figure sanctioned by the War Cabinet was 237,300. Agriculture, coal mines, and transport, including railways, were instructed to provide 38,500, 75,000 and 18,000 apiece by 30th June, whilst firms that worked under the Admiralty and

⁶²⁷ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on 67th Division and Yeomanry Cyclist Brigade, 10th-11th and 16th-18th April 1918; TNA, CAB23/7/18, 455th War Cabinet meeting, 7th August 1918.

⁶²⁸ TNA, WO32/9557, 'The number of men necessary to maintain the forces in the field' by Army Council, 29th March 1918.

Ministry of Munitions had to comb out 108,500 men. To facilitate the withdrawal of labour, Geddes utilised the dormant procedures within the Military Service (No. 1) Act, 1918, which had been passed in early February. Primarily, this had empowered Geddes, as the Minister of National Service, to cancel all exemptions provided by tribunals on occupational grounds. This, in turn, enabled him to implement 'scheduled releases of men from formerly protected industries' via 'clean cuts', which withdrew men based upon their age. The legislation had also improved the speed in which these actions could be carried out. Not only had the grace period, granted to men whose exemption had expired or withdrawn, been reduced from two months to two weeks, but it limited a tribunal's authority, who could only hear and grant concessions based upon ostensive personal grounds, such as economic hardship. Collectively, this enabled Geddes to quickly respond to the German Spring Offensive and, on 9th April, he cancelled all exemptions based upon occupation for men aged 23 or younger.⁶²⁹

Due to the severity of the crisis, this legislation was expanded through the Military Service (No. 2) Act, 1918, in early May. Firstly, it sped up the administrative process and simplified the training difficulties discussed earlier, as youths were called up upon attaining the age of 18, rather than 18 years and one month. Whilst this would give youths an additional one month of training, the age of military service was raised from 40 to 51, with powers granted to raise it to 56 through an Order in Council. It was estimated that this could raise up to 110,000 for military service, though the War Office outlined that these men would not be used for offensive operations. They would either be used as substitutes for younger 'A', 'B I' or 'B II' personnel within home defence or auxiliary units at home and abroad, or would be directed into lower category 'garrison battalions' that, as will be noted below, were used to hold 'quiet' parts of the Western Front. The two most significant aspects of this legislation, however, was the ability to withdraw any exemption, including those based on acute personal circumstances, as well as the power to impose conscription in Ireland. In relation to the first, it was used to ensure the 'clean cut' approach was fully realised and, on 20th April and 4th June, two royal proclamations outlined that no man, aged between 18 and 23 and classified as 'A' or 'B' category, were to be retained in industry, bar a few exemptions upheld for 'very

⁶²⁹ TNA, CAB23/5/67, 375th War Cabinet meeting, 27th March 1918; TNA, CAB23/6/17, 395th War Cabinet Meeting, 19th April 1918; TNA, NATS1/354, Memoranda by Geddes, 'Maintenance of the forces', 24th March 1918 and, 'The Manpower Situation, 1917-1918', 17th June 1918; McDermott, *British Military Service Tribunals, 1916-1918*, pp. 27-28.

narrow' personal reasons. In the case of Ireland, Geddes estimated that 150,000 men could be conscripted within a liberal tribunal system. Bar some military opinion that endorsed this, however, the War Cabinet recognised the immense difficulties, and possible political reaction, this could create across the Island of Ireland.⁶³⁰ Yet, the War Cabinet feared in equal measure the adverse, even hostile, reaction by the British public to Ireland being exempt from these changes, as it could undermine morale and compliance with these draconian demands. Though conscription was never implemented in Ireland, it created a conscription crisis that united Sinn Féin and Irish nationalism together with disparate groups, including the Irish Parliamentary Party, who had advocated a constitutional approach to Ireland's position within the British Empire. Though the Easter Rising in April 1916 had, 'changed the balance of Irish politics and the course of Irish history', this decision had intensified the political climate for no material gain.⁶³¹

Despite this, these actions produced a significant number of recruits for the British Army. In the short term, the War Office were able to draft 340,378 reinforcements between 21st March and 30th April, which covered pre-existing shortages and the 236,300 casualties sustained from 21st March. This was buttressed by the arrival of the 52nd (Lowland) and 74th (Yeomanry) Divisions from Palestine and, overall, it was estimated that, on balance, the total net loss to the BEF by May 1918 was 60,000. Though this had drained the reinforcement system and led to a projected reduction in output for the next several months, Geddes had secured a renewed reinforcement stream for the BEF in the short term.⁶³²

As outlined in table 3.4, the MNS had generated an estimated 256,981 recruits for the British Army between 21st March and 30th June 1918, which represented 81.8 percent of recruits raised for the armed forces during this period. Though 44,141, or 17.2 percent, were below 'A' grade, many of these recruits proceeded overseas due to the War Office's decision

⁶³⁰ TNA, CAB23/5/64 and 66, 372nd and 374th War Cabinet meeting, 25th and 27th March 1918; TNA, NATS1/294, 'Recruits over 40 years of age' by MNS, 1st July 1918; TNA, NATS1/354, 'The Manpower Situation, 1917-1918' by Geddes, 17th June 1918; Grievs, *The Politics of Manpower*, p. 188.

⁶³¹ Bowman, Timothy, Butler, William and Wheatley, Michael, *The Disparity of Sacrifice: Irish Recruitment to the British Armed Forces, 1914-1918* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp. 82-83 and 125-127; Gregory, Adrian, "You might as well recruit Germans': British public opinion and the decision to conscript the Irish in 1918', in Gregory, Adrian and Pařeta, Senia (eds), *Ireland the Great War: 'A war to unite us all?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 113-132.

⁶³² TNA, NATS1/354, 'Maintenance of the armed forces' by Geddes, 22nd May 1918; TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 9th May 1918; TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office; Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. II*, pp. 301 and 490.

to lower the physical standard for active service to 'B I' and 'B II' in March. As will be discussed in chapter five, 'A' and 'B I' recruits served alongside each other in 44 'front line divisions', whilst 'B II' soldiers were formed into garrison battalions across five 'second line' divisions to hold quiet parts of the line.⁶³³ This was part of a larger shift in priorities between the three services. Whereas the Manpower Committee had prioritised the Royal Navy and the air services, now the RAF, in December 1917, both services were subjugated to the needs of the army for the interim. Though this was reviewed by Geddes in September 1918, which recommended the recontinued priority of the Royal Navy and RAF, the armistice was signed before the War Cabinet could deliberate upon this.⁶³⁴ This short term reorientation, as well as the influx of battalions from other theatres, was vital, as it enabled the War Cabinet and War Office to restore 13 divisions that had be reduced to cadres in the Spring of 1918.

Table 3.4: Estimated number of recruits raised from the civil population for the armed forces, 21st March - 30th June 1918.⁶³⁵

	Grade 'A'			Grade 'B' and lower			Total
	Under 18 years and eight months	18 years and eight months to 43	Over 43	Under 18 years and eight months	18 years and eight months to 43	Over 43	
Armed forces							
Royal Navy	448	21,729	741	183	5,225	430	28,756
British Army*	63,426	145,524	3,890	12,765	26,953	4,423	256,981
RAF	6,725	8,591	843	1,690	8,833	1,568	28,250
Total	70,599	175,844	5,474	14,638	41,011	6,421	313,987

* Includes recruitment figures for RFC until the RAF formed on 1st April 1918

One evident feature of these statistics, however, is the low number of men, aged 43 and over, that were conscripted. Though Geddes estimated that 60,000 men would become immediately available through the Military Service (No. 2) Act, 1918, few were recruited. Whilst this could be due to the sense of crisis passing after April, it appears stout resistance from recently weakened tribunals were responsible, as they, 'proved extremely reluctant to

⁶³³ IWM, 13802, Report by Egerton on 227th Mixed Brigade, 8-9th April 1918; TNA, WO32/11284, 'The Personnel employed with the Army in Great Britain' by Lawson, 24th October 1918.

⁶³⁴ TNA, NATS1/354, 'Manpower in 1918-1919' by Geddes, 10th September 1918.

⁶³⁵ Compiled from TNA, NATS1/227, 'Manpower Situation - Second Half of 1918' by Geddes, 19th July 1918; TNA, NATS1/354, 'Maintenance of the forces' by Geddes, 24th March 1918.

deny exemptions to married men falling within the new age-limit.⁶³⁶ During a tour of South-Western counties, the Director of National Service for the South-Western Region, Hughes Buller, noted the great anxiety amongst tribunals regarding older men. In Bath, the chairman of the appeal and local tribunals asked if older men with large families should receive special dispensation, whilst his counterpart in Exeter claimed older men should be given the opportunity to replace younger men in munition firms. The local tribunal in Trowbridge requested the MNS to investigate firms under the Ministry of Munitions, including the local Avon Rubber Company, who were forcing older men to go overseas by retaining younger workers. Though most of these men would have gone to rearward services, such as the ASC, its members stated that, 'they were asked to send men of 44, 45, and 46, into the Army when it was palpable to everyone that there were men about 30... in protected trades... doing work which could in many instances be done by women, or older men (hear hear).' Though tribunals had had their power limited by Geddes, they were still able to use the last of their influence over 'narrow personnel grounds' to protect older men, whose call up was deemed a disparity of sacrifice within the nation.⁶³⁷

Despite these actions, there has been a series of accusations against political and military authorities regarding the state of British manpower in 1918, and whether the British Army could have been reinforced before the German Spring Offensive. Discounting the Manpower Committee, which has already been discussed, this has manifested itself within the historiography through the Maurice Debate and an overview of War Office statistics. In relation to the latter, these statistics refer to the number of 'A' graded soldiers available in the UK before the German Spring Offensive in March 1918. These figures, ranging from 449,000 to 967,000, have become a point of contention within the flurry of memoirs in the inter-war period, whose authors attempted to apportion blame for the great difficulties associated with manpower policy. Whilst the official historian, Sir James Edmonds, accused the government of somehow withholding trained soldiers already within the army, Lloyd George claimed the army had hoarded manpower in the home army. Others, such as Sir

⁶³⁶ TNA, CAB23/6/53, 431st War Cabinet meeting, 17th June 1918; Grievs, *The Politics of Manpower*, p. 188; McDermott, *British Military Service Tribunals, 1916-1918*, p. 28.

⁶³⁷ TNA, NATS1/295, Meetings held between the Director of National Service for the South-Western Region and Local tribunals in the South-West, June 1918; McDermott, *British Military Service Tribunals, 1916-1918*, p. 28.

Winston Churchill, toed a middle line and promoted both arguments in some manner.⁶³⁸ This, in turn, has been reproduced by historians, who have quoted different figures and arguments concerning civil or military failure to produce the numbers needed.⁶³⁹

The Maurice Debate is intrinsically linked to this and has generated a similar amount of contemporary and academic discourse.⁶⁴⁰ Primarily, this involved the former Director of Military Operations, Sir Frederick Maurice, who was replaced on 20th April. Convinced Lloyd George was starving the BEF of manpower, his concern became palpable when the Prime Minister incorrectly informed Parliament that there were only three 'white' divisions in Egypt and Palestine, as well as the BEF being stronger on 1st January 1918 than it had been on the same day the year previous. This was repeated to Parliament on 18th April by the Under-Secretary of State for War, Ian Macpherson, whilst the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Andrew Bonar Law, wrongly claimed five days later that Haig, and not the government, had organised an extension of the British Line with the French Commander-in-Chief, General Phillippe Pétain. Though this will be discussed in chapter five, Maurice believed Lloyd George had misled Parliament. After writing to, and receiving no response from, Wilson regarding these issues, Maurice wrote an open letter accusing the government of perpetuating falsehoods. Published by five national papers on 7th May, it argued that the British Army was weaker on 1st January 1918 than one year before, that the Supreme War Council in France had extended the line, and that there were five, and not three, 'white' divisions in Egypt and Palestine.⁶⁴¹

All three were factually true, but Lloyd George successfully rebuked the Leader of the Opposition, H. H. Asquith's, attempt to censure the government by claiming the figures he

⁶³⁸ Beckett, Ian F. W., 'Frocks and Brasshats' in Bond, Brian (ed.), *The First World War and British Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 90-91 and 97; Churchill, Winston S., *The World Crisis, 1916-1918, Part II, Vol. IV* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1927), pp. 378-383; Edmonds, J. E., *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. I* (London: Macmillan, 1935), p. 52; Lloyd George, *War Memoirs, 1917-1918*, pp. 14-150 and 176-181.

⁶³⁹ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 119 and 349; Middlebrook, Martin, *The Kaiser's Battle. 21 March 1918: The First Day of the German Spring Offensive* (London: Allen Lane, 1978), p. 25; Perry, F. W., *The Commonwealth Armies: Manpower and Organisation in Two World Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 28; Woodward, *Lloyd George and the Generals*, pp. 236-237.

⁶⁴⁰ Beckett, 'Frocks and Brasshats', pp. 100-101; Gooch, John 'The Maurice Debate, 1918', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 3:4 (1968), pp. 211-228; Lloyd George, David, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, 1918, Vol. VI*, (Boston: Little and Brown, 1937), pp 51-72; Maurice, Nancy (ed.), *The Maurice Case: From the Papers of Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice* (London: Leo Cooper, 1972).

⁶⁴¹ TNA, CAB23/6/28, 406th War Cabinet meeting, 7th May 1918; Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 190-192; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 242-243.

presented came from Maurice's department. Though the historiography has focused upon these claims, including the legitimacy of the figures and whether Lloyd George had full access to them, these analyses are narrow and fail to consider important aspects. Specifically, whether there were large quantities of men within industry or the home army that could have been spared for, and sent to, the BEF before the German Spring Offensive.⁶⁴² Only David Woodward has touched upon this, but his and other assessments have focused too heavily upon individual actors, such as Lloyd George or the 'faceless' War Office, which has limited the analysis of this period.⁶⁴³ It is therefore vital to consider this from a thematic point of view, which focuses upon the state of industry and the interior manpower economy of the army in 1918. Though it will demonstrate that further measures were possible in industry and, in particular, the army, it is evident that Britain had reached its manpower ceiling by March 1918. The German Spring Offensive had, however, forced Britain to extend far beyond it in a desperate attempt to restore the BEF.

Despite allegations that the 313,987 recruits raised from industry after 21st March is evidence of the government withholding men, it is clear that these efforts had a seismic impact upon industry. Specifically, the affect this had upon morale on the Home Front and the considerable reduction in industrial, raw material, and agricultural output that was needed by the British Army, the Entente, and civilians. For example, the War Cabinet agreed that 30,000 'A' men, aged 19 to 31, were to be combed out of agriculture by 30th June, with more obtainable if other sources of manpower, such as Prisoners of War, women, boys, and convalescents, could be used. This demand was spread across counties and was administered by the County Agriculture Committees, who had expert knowledge of the land and the operation of farms under their authority. Though they were unsuccessful in achieving the full quota, with only 22,827 obtained by 30th September, the impact this had was substantial. Geddes outlined in March that this would cripple the nation's agricultural policy for 1918 and 1919, which had been designed to help Britain become more self-sufficient and less vulnerable to the effects of unrestricted submarine warfare. An estimated 4,000,000 acres of land had been ploughed since 1916, with most of it converted to arable farming to produce higher crop yields. Yet, by withdrawing labour, farms could not collect the whole 1918 harvest

⁶⁴² Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 190-192; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 242-243.

⁶⁴³ Woodward, 'Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army', pp. 241-252.

or plough the additional 550,000 acres needed to rest heavily cultivated topsoil. This, in turn, was projected to reduce the 1919 yield below that achieved in 1918, which would increase the price of essential items, such as milk. Though the substantive threat posed by U-boats had passed by 1918, as the Royal Navy and the United States Navy had introduced effective counter-measures through the convoy system, the withdrawal of agrarian labour was disastrous for morale in rural communities. It was, 'practically raising a mutiny' across the countryside, as farmers felt their sacrifices for the nation, in both profits and land to increase output, had been meaningless.⁶⁴⁴

This crisis, deemed relatively small in comparison to other departments, was mirrored across the board. The Ministry of Munitions outlined how the loss of 200 to 300 men via clean cuts in the Metropolitan Carriage, Wagon and Finance Company in Birmingham would cut tank production from 50 to 15 a week, whilst the Admiralty calculated the loss of one destroyer a week due to 715 tube-makers being conscripted. Both were overruled by the War Cabinet to ensure continuity in recruitment and an equality of sacrifice, which was considered vital for placating organised labour.⁶⁴⁵ Even this, however, was insufficient, and threats of industrial unrest, including the slowing down of dilution and output on the shopfloor, materialised in July when 7,000 employees ceased working in Coventry.⁶⁴⁶ In other cases, the impact was delayed. In coal mining, it was estimated in August that the withdrawal of 75,000 miners, though partially offset by substitutes from the home army, would lead to an estimated shortage of 20 million tonnes by winter.⁶⁴⁷ Exacerbated by the increasing rates of the Spanish Influenza, Geddes and the War Cabinet considered multiple means of reducing demand or increasing yields until October, when the shortage became acute.⁶⁴⁸ It was warned that current output would not support households, industry, or the Entente, with the lack of coal for munition firms leading up to 500,000 idle or unemployed workers. Lloyd George, who had fiercely resisted attempts to withdraw manpower from the army, acquiesced, and ordered

⁶⁴⁴ TNA, CAB23/5/68, 376th War Cabinet meeting, 28th March 1918; TNA, CAB23/6/17, 31, 44 and 53, 395th, 409th, 422nd and 431st War Cabinet meeting, 19th April, 11th and 30th May and 17th June 1918; TNA, NATS1/242, Report on agricultural comb outs by MNS, September 1918; TNA, NATS1/282, Report on agricultural comb outs by MNS, [ND] c. May 1918; Watson, Alexander, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary at War, 1914-1918* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), pp. 417-148 and 435-437.

⁶⁴⁵ TNA, CAB23/6/53 and 58, 431st and 436th War Cabinet meeting, 17th and 26th June 1918.

⁶⁴⁶ TNA, CAB23/7/12 and 14, 449th and 451st War Cabinet Meeting, 19th and 24th July 1918.

⁶⁴⁷ TNA, CAB23/7/23 and 30, 460th and 467th War Cabinet meeting, 16th and 30th August 1918.

⁶⁴⁸ TNA, CAB23/7/23, 30, 31 and 39, 460th, 467th, 468th and 476th War Cabinet meeting, 16th and 30th August and 3rd and 24th September 1918.

the withdrawal of 50,000 'A' or 'B I' miners from the armed forces to avoid crippling deficiencies on the Home Front. Though this led to miners being combed out from the army (again), primarily from divisions out of the line, the Royal Navy and RAF were included in this order.⁶⁴⁹

The dislocation suffered demonstrates the sheer pressure exerted upon industry throughout 1918. Though Geddes estimated in July that another 300,000 could be combed out that year, this represented the upmost that could be withdrawn without crippling the entire war effort. Though Geddes aimed to recruit 300,000 men throughout 1919, he admitted only a small proportion of 'A' men aged 18 and eight months to 43 could now be obtained from industry, with most being youths born in 1901 and reaching the age of 18. A greater number could be obtained if the MNS was provided oversight of all labour, including the power to create pools of mobile labour that could be deployed where needed. Similar to Chamberlain's original concept of an industrial army, this would provide the greatest economy in civil departments and release additional men overtime without disrupting industrial output. It was, however, impossible to enact without the co-operation of industries and organised labour who, as discussed, were bitterly opposed to dilution and industrial compulsion. Therefore, claims that manpower within industry was withheld before the German Spring Offensive is somewhat of a false dichotomy. Though 700,000 had, or were going to, be withdrawn throughout 1918, numbers produced was only done at the great expense of industrial and agricultural output needed by the British Army and the Entente. Morale and compliance had also suffered on the Home Front, as the rural and industrial unrest recorded were part of the broader resistance exhibited by society to the administration of the Military Service Acts.⁶⁵⁰

As the War Cabinet destabilised industry to provide these numbers, there was growing pressure from various authorities, including Lloyd George, Geddes, the French Government and the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces, General Ferdinand Foch, for the War Office to fully utilise the soldiers they had at their disposal. Though Foch's demand for 100,000 soldiers in the UK will be considered in chapter five, this pressure was due to the

⁶⁴⁹ TNA, CAB23/8/7, 488th War Cabinet meeting, 15th October 1918.

⁶⁵⁰ TNA, NATS1/354, Memoranda by Geddes, 'Labour Supply and Regulation', 21st May 1918, 'Manpower Situation: Second half of 1918', 19th July 1918 and 'Manpower in 1918-1919', 10th September 1918.

British Army at home numbering an estimated 1,400,000 in March 1918.⁶⁵¹ Despite Macready's argument in October 1917 that no more men could be withdrawn from the armed forces, it raises an important question regarding the interior manpower economy of the British Army. Specifically, did the War Office employ soldiers efficiently at home and whether more could have been used for service abroad or as substitutes for 'A' men in industry.⁶⁵²

Despite claims that as many as 967,000 of these men were trained and ready, the army in the UK was not a homogeneous formation trained for overseas service, but formed up of multiple, inter-connected services and formations that performed critical roles. Though no consistent breakdowns are available, Macready outlined in May that the British Army at Home was formed of eight constituent part. This included draft finding units, hospitals and command depots, labour and non-combatants home services, home service combatants, administrative services, regimental depots, Officer cadet Battalions and OTCs, and units preparing for overseas. Upon inspection, many of these groups, in terms of their function, cannot be considered as abundant to, or held without, need. Draft finding units were, excluding their establishment, 'A' and 'B' soldiers under training or physical strengthening, and therefore would be drafted overseas upon finishing this process. Hospital and Command Depots represented soldiers who were undergoing treatment organised by medical staff, whilst Officer Cadet Battalions were essential to producing officer reinforcements.⁶⁵³

Home Defence units, numbering an estimated 400,979 in January 1918, need to be examined, as they, and the prospect of a German invasion in from 1916, were severely criticised during the inter-war period.⁶⁵⁴ Contrary to Hine's and Woodward's claim that Lloyd George had attempted to persuade the War Office to withdraw men from home defence in December 1917, the CIGS, Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, had attempted to reduce home service divisions between 1916 and 1917.⁶⁵⁵ The War Office felt compelled, however, to maintain this number due to the Admiralty. They refused to guarantee the defence of the

⁶⁵¹ Ibid, 'Manpower in 1918-1919' by Geddes, 10th September 1918; TNA, CAB23/7/12, 449th War Cabinet meeting, 19th July 1918; TNA, WO106/431, Letter from Lieutenant-General John Philip Du Cane to Wilson, 14th May 1918; Greenhalgh, *Foch in Command*, pp. 345-346.

⁶⁵² TNA, WO32/5091, Memorandum from Macready to Lord Derby, 29th October 1917.

⁶⁵³ TNA, WO106/341, Memorandum on troops in UK by Macready, 16th May 1918.

⁶⁵⁴ TNA WO106/314, 'Troops required for Home Defence' by Robertson, 3rd January 1918; Churchill, *The World Crisis, 1916-1918*, pp. 313-314, 381, 383 and 459; Lloyd George, *War Memoirs, 1917-1918*, pp. 169-170.

⁶⁵⁵ Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 218; Woodward, 'Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army', pp. 250-251.

UK and claimed the Royal Navy could not intervene with an invasion for the first 24 to 48 hours. The initial scale of attack had been fixed at 70,000 between 1914 and 1915, but the Admiralty had increased this to a minimum of 170,000 troops, as well as decreasing the possibility of intervention until 36 hours. Though the War Office, as mentioned, were able to dispatch the 57th (2nd West Lancashire), 58th (2nd/1st London Regiment), 59th (2nd North Midland), 62nd (2nd West Riding) and 66th (2nd East Lancashire) Divisions overseas between January and March 1917, this was done by agreeing to substitute these and other 'A' men with a larger number of soldiers, categorised 'B' or below, in home defence battalions. As discussed in chapter two, the War Office had already begun to categorise soldiers and link their physical fitness to specific roles from 1916, which had begun this process. In addition, reserve battalions formed part of this total and they provided an estimated 128,000 for coast defence. SR Brigades continued their pre-war role of garrisoning ports, whilst 'A IV' Graduated Battalions, as touched upon, had replaced 48 home service battalions across eight 'mobile' divisions.⁶⁵⁶

It was only in December 1917, during the fourth inter-service conference, that a new limit of 30,000 was agreed upon, after the dissenting voices in the Admiralty were overruled by the War Cabinet. The War Office wasted no time and, between January and March 1918, disbanded four of its eight 'mobile' divisions, namely the 65th, 71st, 72nd and 73rd divisions. It concentrated all of its Graduated Battalions into the remaining second line Territorial divisions, who subsequently lost their territorial identities. They, as well as the SR and a reduced number of home service battalions in mixed brigades, maintained home defence, whilst a number of minor units were retained for auxiliary roles, including anti-aircraft defences. Only one 'A' formation, the Cyclist Division, was retained for home defence, though this formed part of the garrison of Ireland. Though deemed essential to maintaining peace, and quelling any future revolt in Ireland, which grew more pressing with the prospect of conscription being imposed, the War Office transferred 5,000 cyclists overseas in March. Therefore, the War Office were not only successful at sending most troops fit for active service abroad from home defence, but did so to the detriment of recruit training in SR, Territorial,

⁶⁵⁶ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on home defence battalions, 1917-1918; TNA, WO106/341, Memorandum on troops in UK by Macready, 16th May 1918; Moon, Howard, 'The Invasion of the United Kingdom: Public Controversy and Official Planning, 1888-1918' (University of London PhD Thesis, 1968), pp. 588-589, 597-599, 601 and 608-611.

and Graduated Battalions. Though the Manpower Committee's proposal, to reduce 'B' personnel at home for use as drafts or garrison battalions overseas, was not acted upon by the War Office until the German Spring Offensive, Macready was hamstrung by GHQ, who refused to employ more than 11,000 in rearward services. Nevertheless, it is clear that the War Office retained as few 'A' soldiers as possible for home defence and attempts to minimise the numbers employed was undermined by the Admiralty, who refused to maintain its pre-war commitment to intercepting and impeding an enemy invasion.⁶⁵⁷

Despite this, Woodward claims the War Office withheld a 'mobile reserve' of 120,000. This was mostly infantry and, estimated at 90 percent of the force, could have been used to replenish the BEF before March 1918. Woodward provides little detail however and has based his assertion upon an interview conducted in 1937 between Captain B.H. Liddell Hart and Colonel Cecil John Lyons, who served in Gallipoli and then as General Staff Officer, grade I, at the War Office. According to Lyons, the War Office believed, in the event of an attack, that Haig could last 18 days without large reinforcements. Therefore, they retained the reserve on the basis of three principles. Firstly, it was assumed that their retention at home would conceal the force from enemy intelligence. Secondly, it would help preserve the morale of the nation 'suffering from the effect of Passchendaele' and, thirdly, ensure men spent their money at home to help the economy.⁶⁵⁸ It is difficult to believe this testimony when these relatively minor factors are compared to Macready's urgent demand for manpower. Yet, based upon the size stated and the terminology used, Lyons was referring to either Young Soldier and Graduate Battalions as a group, or the four home service divisions. As mentioned, youths formed an emergency reserve of 120,000 in December 1917, whilst the 64th, 67th, 68th and 69th Divisions were composed of Graduated Battalions that were referred to as 'mobile' divisions.⁶⁵⁹ As outlined, neither group were available for duty due to age or fitness and, as a

⁶⁵⁷ TNA, CAB23/5/63, 371st War Cabinet meeting, 23rd March 1918; CAB27/14, Fourth meeting of Manpower Committee, 15th December 1917 and Cabinet Committee on Manpower report, 2nd April 1918; TNA, WO32/5274, Report by Wilson on Home Defence, 2nd October 1918; TNA, WO106/314, 'Troops required for Home Defence' by Robertson, 3rd January 1918; TNA, WO106/341, Memorandum on troops in UK by Macready, 16th May 1918; Becke, *Order of Battle of Divisions, 2nd Line Territorial Force*, pp. 65, 105, 110, and 116; Moon, 'The Invasion of the United Kingdom', pp. 623-624 and 634-636.

⁶⁵⁸ Woodward, 'Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army', pp. 251-252; Woodward, *Lloyd George and the Generals*, pp. 237-238.

⁶⁵⁹ TNA, CAB27/14, Fourth meeting of Manpower Committee, 15th December 1917; Becke, *Order of Battle of Divisions, 2nd Line Territorial Force*, pp. 59, 81, 89 and 97; Mitchinson, K. W., *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army, 1908-1919* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 250-252.

result, there was no reserve of 120,000 'A' soldiers retained in the UK by either political or military authorities.

More problematic, however, was the vast number of men, graded 'B' or below, who were retained and employed within the various administrative and support services in the UK. This was wide ranging and included the establishment of units and formations, labour and employment companies, and record and pay offices. Despite the criticisms noted, the War Office were sensitive to claims of hoarding 'A' manpower and had implemented an extensive, and arguably zealot, comb out throughout 1917. This generated an estimated 80,000 'A' recruits for the army, though it targeted important groups that were difficult to replace, including NCO instructors. They had also placed pressure on the BEF since 1915, which led to an estimated 45,000 soldiers being diverted to the frontline in 1917.⁶⁶⁰ In their place, however, the War Office gathered large numbers of soldiers, graded 'B' or below, to support the British Army at home. Though important to relieve training formations of routine fatigues and labour works, as discussed in chapter two, this had grown out of proportion. Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Lawson, who had been used to inspect rearward services in France in 1916, reported upon this during an inspection of the home forces in August 1918. Despite the lack of comprehensive statistics, he reported that 81,661 soldiers were employed on 'employments and domestic duties' alone, with 69,520, or 85.1 percent, used for regimental fatigues. While some undertook important roles, such as the estimated 3,412 regimental tradesman who were shoemakers and tailors, 23,846 were employed in officer's, sergeant's, and men's messes, whilst 12,180 were assigned as grooms and batmen to officers.⁶⁶¹

This latter group, he argued, could be abolished and replaced by providing an officer with a small servant's allowance, whilst soldiers across various roles, including messes, could be reduced by using discharged soldiers or increasing the number of female workers, which only numbered 16,029, or 16.3 percent of labour employed, in this grouping. Though the development of womanpower will be discussed below and in chapter five, Lawson's main suggestion was to reduce the scale of regimental and unit employments provided, with regimental fatigues assigned to recruits under training. This would disrupt training, but there was always a small floating population at training formations, such as men awaiting dental

⁶⁶⁰ TNA, WO32/5091, Memorandum from Macready to Lord Derby, 29th October 1917.

⁶⁶¹ TNA, WO32/11284, 'The Personnel employed with the Army in Great Britain' by Lawson, 24th October 1918.

treatment, transfer or drafting, that could assist. Combined with a reduction in the number of reserve battalions, which trained a smaller proportion of recruits than previous, the British Army at home could become more efficient.⁶⁶²

Not all formations in the home army were used for military functions, however. There was a host of units that were created and loaned to governmental departments for civil work. For example, 10 Transport Workers battalions and 135 agricultural companies were created to supplement civilian labour at dockyards and farms, and numbered an estimated 10,806 and 68,563, respectively. Though seemingly superfluous to need, as these soldiers could simply be discharged and used within civilian trades, they were appreciated by governmental departments who had little control over the disposition of labour. Unlike civilians who, in the absence of industrial compulsion, could choose where to work, these men were under military discipline and could be deployed and distributed according to need. Though military authorities found it difficult to keep track of men within these units, as seen by the 1,351 'A' and 4,054 'B I' soldiers in Transport Workers Battalions in August 1918, they provided a useful resource to industry. So much so, that the War Cabinet overruled the War Office's decision to cap Transport Workers battalions at 10,000 during the March crisis, and ordered an increase in establishment to 15,000 in April 1918.⁶⁶³

Despite the worth of these battalions, colonial labour could have been used in the UK, as done across the various theatres of war, to relieve soldiers in these roles. As will be discussed in chapter five, the War Office deployed an estimated 200,000 non-white workers from across the globe on the Western Front between 1916 and 1918.⁶⁶⁴ Though many were unskilled labourers, a sizable proportion, especially from China, were semi-skilled or skilled workers that could provide specialists services. Others, such as the British West Indies Regiment, were extensively used as Stevedores in Italy and could have replaced Transport Workers Battalions in the UK. Though this would alleviate Britain's manpower crisis, it was never enacted due to domestic and racial concerns. British trade unions vehemently opposed the notion of their workers being substituted by colonial labourers, whilst the Colonial Office and Dominions, especially South Africa, were strongly opposed to it. When the idea of

⁶⁶² Ibid.

⁶⁶³ Ibid; TNA, CAB23/6/11, 389th War Cabinet meeting, 11th April 1918.

⁶⁶⁴ Kilson, Robin Wallace, 'Calling up the Empire: The British Military use of non-white labor in France, 1916-1920' (Harvard University PhD Thesis, 1990), p. 4.

employing indigenous South Africans in the UK was raised in June 1916, it was rejected by both, as they feared the impact this could have upon racial hierarchy and civil rule across the British Empire.⁶⁶⁵

The refusal to use colonial manpower was partially offset by the growing participation of woman, who saw their gendered role, often defined as motherhood and sending men off to defend hearth and home, evolve as the manpower crisis deteriorated. Though motherhood was constantly emphasised as their primary responsibility, they entered areas of work that had been the traditional preserve for men.⁶⁶⁶ An estimated 1,500,000 women were used as dilutees in industry and commerce between 1914 and 1918, which enabled a large proportion of men to be withdrawn from industry.⁶⁶⁷ Others had sought closer relations with the armed forces and, from 1915, donned uniform through organisations, such as The Women's Legion. By February 1916, the Women's Legion worked directly with the army in the UK and became, 'substitutes for men, taking into the military sphere the already established idea of dilution, by which women in industry replaced men so that they could move into the front line.'⁶⁶⁸

Despite their success, the movement was not centralised until the creation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in March 1917. This allowed women to choose between five, and then seven, groups of occupations, including clerics, cooks, and driver mechanics. Though this reinforced gendered stereotypes, as women were used as substitutes in areas that were deemed appropriate for their gender, it recognised their importance in total war. This is evident by their deployment overseas, which will be discussed in chapter five, and the creation of the Women's Royal Naval Service and Women's Royal Air Force in November 1917 and April 1918, respectively. Though recruitment for the WAAC became sluggish from December 1917, in part due to unfounded rumours of impropriety, an estimated 80,000 to 90,000 women served across all formations at home and abroad. Most

⁶⁶⁵ Grundlingh, Albert, *Fighting Their Own War: South African Blacks and the First World War* (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1987), pp. 39-42; Guoqi, Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front: Chinese Workers in the Great War* (London: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 24-25 and 90-91; Smith, Richard, *Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War: Race, masculinity and the development of national consciousness* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 82; Winegard, Timothy C., *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 137-138.

⁶⁶⁶ Noakes, Lucy, *Women in the British Army: War and the Gentle Sex, 1907-1948* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 41-45.

⁶⁶⁷ TNA, WO162/41, Fifth Interim Report of the Civil War Workers' Committee, August 1918.

⁶⁶⁸ Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, pp. 52-53 and 58.

served in the WAAC, which had become the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC) in April 1918, with 30,155 serving in Britain in November 1918.⁶⁶⁹ This, combined with an estimated 22,541 civilian women that were employed by the army across a multitude of departments in August 1918, represented a significant contribution. Though Lawson rightfully noted that a greater number of women could have been absorbed if recruitment yields had improved, they helped to offset the manpower crisis by acting as substitutes for 'A' or 'B' men at home.⁶⁷⁰

Despite this success, Macready was alive to the broader difficulties noted above and, in liaison with Geddes in October 1917, outlined a system of exchange with industry. The War Office aimed to create a card index system for the entire British Army at home, which would keep up to date records on each soldier's trade, previous occupation, and list of employments they had been engaged upon. This would enable the War Office to discharge large groups of men from key trades who, upon employment by the MNS, could be exchanged for younger 'A' men for frontline units. It was never finished, however. Macready claimed it was due to the difficulty of keeping track of soldiers, especially as many had been transferred during the German Spring Offensive. Yet, the original completion date had been set as December 1917, which indicates the great difficulties they faced in creating an organised record of men serving at home. To overcome these difficulties, the War Office attached an 'investigation officer' to each Home Command in April 1918, whose duty was to ensure manpower was used economically. By May, Eastern Command estimated that 3,861 and 3,414 soldiers were marked as available for drafting and substitution respectively, whilst 8,038 were transferred to a corps deemed more suitable for their medical category and skillset. In September, a total of 24,739 were marked for similar reasons, whilst 12,734 soldiers were called up for special examination, as they had missed their triannual medical review.⁶⁷¹

Despite the usefulness of investigation officers, these results demonstrate an acute failure to achieve an economic distribution of manpower within the British Army at home. As

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 58, 63, 68, 79-81; *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire in the Great War* (London: HMSO, 1922), p. 206; Walsh, Barbara 'The Key Role Played by WAAC British Post Office Female Staff in Army Signal Units on the Western Front, 1917-1920', *Information and Culture*, 55:1 (2020), pp. 81-82.

⁶⁷⁰ TNA, WO32/11284, 'The Personnel employed with the Army in Great Britain' by Lawson, 24th October 1918.

⁶⁷¹ TNA, CAB23/5/20, 328th War Cabinet meeting, 22nd January 1918; TNA, NATS1/484, Letter from Macready to Geddes, 27th May 1918; TNA, WO32/5091, Memorandum from Macready to Lord Derby, 29th October 1917; TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office.

mentioned in chapter two, the War Office were reluctant to release wounded or low category soldiers under their command, as it was hoped that their health would improve to the standard needed for frontline service. Yet, it is clear that the management of the forces was wholly inadequate for a multi-million strong army prosecuting a total war, as it was based upon a decentralised system designed to administer a peace-time force of 250,000. As a result, the War Office only had a rudimentary understanding of the men under their command, which led to an excessive number of soldiers being retained in superfluous roles unrelated to their skills or medical aptitude. This, in turn, disrupted their ability to exchange low category tradesmen in uniform with an equivalent number of 'A' men from industry. Whilst Lawson's report presented possible solutions, the War Office had refuted calls for a review of the home army until August 1918. It was only when the manpower crisis had reached its most critical stage, that the War Office acceded to War Cabinet pressure and accepted that the British Army could be more economical in its manpower policies.⁶⁷²

Collectively, this led to an extremely pessimistic outlook for 1919. 6,100,000 of 9,500,000 men under 43 in 1914 had been enlisted into the armed forces, with the remaining population composed of youths coming of age, older men, and males with poor physical health. Even though the army and industry were embarking upon an extensive reorganisation to comb out men for the army, only 300,000, as mentioned, could be withdrawn from civil life throughout 1919. Though Geddes signalled the need for a new set of priorities to govern their distribution, he admitted these decisions would merely indicate areas of importance. Each civil and military department were now in urgent need of manpower and 'there is now no margin in our reserves in civil life which will enable us to meet the demands from one source then another, or to repeat the effort of this spring.' Though the armistice had cut these discussions short, the search for recruits in 1918 had shattered Britain's manpower ceiling.⁶⁷³

The deteriorating manpower position had become a source of great anxiety for both political and military authorities throughout the last two years of war. Despite this, both the War Cabinet and War Office had contributed to this situation, as neither worked in harmony

⁶⁷² TNA, CAB23/7/12, 449th War Cabinet meeting, 19th July 1918; TNA, WO32/5091, Memorandum from Macready to Lord Derby, 29th October 1917.

⁶⁷³ TNA, CAB23/7/12, 449th War Cabinet meeting, 19th July 1918; TNA, NATS1/354, Memoranda by Geddes, 'Manpower Situation: Second half of 1918', 19th July 1918 and 'Manpower in 1918-1919', 10th September 1918; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 251.

towards a common objective. The ascension of Lloyd George as Prime Minister proved inconsequential to the ongoing confusion regarding manpower policy, as powerless, *ad hoc* committees continued to determine it until December 1917. Though the creation of the MNS and Manpower Committee were important developments for the civil control of war, it left the War Office in an increasingly precarious situation regarding the maintenance of the BEF. The manpower that had been successively promised throughout 1917 never materialised, which made it increasingly difficult to make decisions regarding the organisation of the British Army. This led the War Office to search for new sources of manpower and, in January 1917, began a programme of conscription for youths aged 18. This transformed the demographic of recruits and led to a substantial remodelling of the reinforcement system. Approaching this with a level of pragmatism that had been absent between 1914 and 1916, they implemented a series of important reforms to reflect these changes. By December 1917, 120,000 'A' youths were undergoing training across Young Soldier and Graduate Battalions, which had been built upon the moribund TR. Despite the difficulties experienced in propagating the training syllabus, the War Office had forged youths into an emergency reserve that proved instrumental during the German Spring Offensive.

The problem of manpower distribution could not be resolved, however, until the War Cabinet provided firm direction. This was eventually provided by the Manpower Committee in December 1917, which established a series of priorities. The demands of the Royal Navy and air services were given top priority, whilst ship building came second. This was followed by aircraft and tank production and, subsequently, the provision of raw materials, including food and timber. Last came the army, which led to the provision of 120,000 youths, 150,000 'A' and 100,000 'B' (or below) men from civilian life. Despite the low number, which included men for the RFC, military authorities were not without fault. Their demands for 1918 were extremely high and, without regard to civil difficulties, had added 110,000 men for new units. These issues were symptomatic of the worsening civil-military relations, which inevitably influenced the Manpower Committee's decision. Claims, however, that Lloyd George had 'withheld' men from the armed forces is somewhat misleading. These decisions were only made upon the ascension of Geddes, who outlined how Britain had reached its manpower ceiling. Industrial output could not be maintained if the army was reinforced, which forced the War Cabinet to choose between the two. Though they underestimated the offensive

capabilities of the German Army, they had created a clear cut decision regarding the strategic distribution of manpower, on the basis of mechanising the BEF and preserving the Entente's strength until 1919.

The dilemma these questions posed were experienced after March 1918, once the German Spring Offensive pushed the BEF to the brink of destruction. The War Office were forced to deploy its emergency reserve of youths, whilst Geddes, under orders from the War Cabinet, combed out 313,987 recruits from industry between March and June. Though this stabilised the BEF in the short term, industry had been crippled by the withdrawal of labour and, as feared, had led to civil unrest in both rural and urban communities across the UK. The War Office had also been drained of all 'A' category recruits, and had begun to transfer 'B I' and 'B II' men in their place. Though this demonstrated that industry had little hope of providing the men demanded in December 1917, the British Army at home could have provided more men. Despite the War Office's great effort to comb out 'A' men from rearward services and home defence, there was a substantial number of recruits, graded 'B' or below, that could have been exchanged for men in industry. Hampered by a lack of central records, however, Macready was never able to implement a series of exchanges with the MNS as planned.

Though these actions could have provided additional men for industry, it is clear that Britain had shattered through its manpower ceiling by November 1918. The last of Britain's manpower reserve had been absorbed during the German Spring Offensive and the outlook for 1919 was alarming. Industrial output had been severely reduced and the production of key armaments and resources, such as coal, had reached a crisis point by the winter of 1918 and 1919. Not only had this led to extreme shortages at home and abroad in the immediate short term, but it could only be rectified by recalling soldiers from depleted battalions overseas. This reduction was exacerbated by the small amount of manpower projected to become available for operations in 1919. No more than 300,000 could be called up for the armed forces, with only a small proportion of them classified as 'A II'. Most would be youths born in 1901, who would be conscripted upon turning 18. Only a proportion of these would be fit for the frontline and, even then, most would be unavailable for active service until the age of 19, unless emergency measures were once again enacted. It is clear, therefore, that

had the war continued into 1919, no measure could have prevented industrial output and the BEF from spiralling into terminal decline.

Chapter Four

Sustaining the Offensive: The Reinforcement System on the Western Front, 1914-1917

Upon arrival in France in August 1914, the BEF quickly established its reinforcement system as outlined by *FSR 1909, Part II*.⁶⁷⁴ Though dependent upon the War Office to send drafts from the UK, it became evident within the first few days of combat that pre-war planning could not cope with the excessive wastage caused by industrial warfare. Coupled with the rapid expansion of the British Army at home and the advent of trench warfare, GHQ were forced to continuously adapt reinforcement policy and infrastructure to speed up and manage the movement of drafts overseas. Despite the importance this played in sustaining the BEF and, from 1916, the strategy of attrition, it remains a neglected topic. Although Lewis Frederickson, Richard Holt and Alison Hine have assessed aspects of the reinforcement system for the AIF, CEF and BEF respectively, none tackle the process fully.⁶⁷⁵

Therefore, this chapter will assess how GHQ initially organised, and subsequently adapted, its reinforcement policy and system between 1914 and 1917. Notably, its role was different to the reinforcement system in the UK, as it was the end of the logistical chain of manpower. It was not immediately responsible for sourcing or training manpower but for swiftly calling up reinforcements from the UK and integrating them with frontline units. Yet, with the rapid expansion of the BEF and the implementation of the strategy of attrition, GHQ had to consistently support and maintain an army of millions. Therefore, this chapter will demonstrate that GHQ implemented several important changes that partially achieved this between 1914 and 1917. Not only did it restructure the reinforcement system to improve the speed in which reinforcements were deployed, but it developed extensive medical and training systems to support it. The former, as chapter five will demonstrate, became efficient at recycling wounded personnel back into the frontline and rearward services, whilst the latter, as will be discussed in chapter six, attempted with some success to remedy the inadequate training provided to reinforcements in the UK.

⁶⁷⁴ *Field Service Regulations, 1909, Part II* (with 1912 amendments) (HMSO: London, 1912), pp. 56-59.

⁶⁷⁵ Frederickson, Lewis, 'The Development of Australian Infantry on the Western Front 1916-1918: An Imperial model of training, tactics and technology' (University of New South Wales PhD Thesis, 2015), pp. 100-123; Hine, Alison, *Refilling Haig's Armies: The Replacement of British Infantry Casualties on the Western Front, 1916-1919* (Warwick: Helion, 2018); Holt, Richard, *Filling the Ranks: Manpower in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), pp. 169-250.

Unlike what Hine and other proponents of the 'Learning Curve' argue however, this was far from a smooth, gradual transition that improved over time.⁶⁷⁶ Although the BEF continuously refined and developed its reinforcement policy and procedure from 1914, its success was erratic. GHQ only had a limited understanding of how this process, as well as the impact of the strategy of attrition, affected the operational practice and performance of the BEF. This becomes evident when the BEF is compared to the CEF, which operated alongside it as part of the broader imperial army.⁶⁷⁷ Although facing different challenges, the CEF adapted imperial policy or implemented their own to meet national circumstances, which regularly achieved better results. Therefore, brief comparisons will be made throughout the analysis to identify and reveal challenges to, and problems within, British reinforcement policy. Overall, it will demonstrate that the reinforcement system underwent successive changes that struggled, and at times failed, to meet the immense challenges thrown upon it by industrial warfare and the strategy of attrition.

Upon arrival in France, the BEF was supported in the field by six IBDs and six general base depots (GBD) at British bases in Le Havre and Rouen. Pre-war planning, based upon FSR 1909, had estimated that one IBD and GBD was needed to support each division in the field. The former would house and process infantry reinforcements for the twelve battalions assigned to each division, whilst the latter accepted reinforcements for all other arms. Although large quantities of reinforcements could not be kept in France, a 'first reinforcement' accompanied the BEF overseas, which equated to 10 percent of its establishment.⁶⁷⁸

The process of forwarding reinforcements to battalions and calling up additional drafts from the UK relied upon several interconnected procedures undertaken by frontline units and rearwards services. Firstly, routine wastage, caused by sickness and minor day-to-day casualties, were to be reported by divisional headquarters directly to the Inspector-General of Communications (IGC), who oversaw IBDs in the rear. Whilst the IGC sent a copy of this to the Adjutant General's office at the base (3rd Echelon) for record keeping purposes, he was responsible for forwarding reinforcements from depots to the frontline. During active

⁶⁷⁶ Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 297.

⁶⁷⁷ Delaney, Douglas, *The Imperial Army Project: Britain and the Land Forces of the Dominions and India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁶⁷⁸ FSR, 1909, Part II, p. 56; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Army*, pp. 40-41.

operations however, it was the duty of Adjutant General's ('A') Staff from brigade upwards to collate and pass on information regarding casualties to the Adjutant General at GHQ. After considering the overall condition of the BEF, he would instruct the IGC as to the number and order units were to receive reinforcements. The IGC was then responsible for forwarding the requisite number of reinforcements to the frontline and would inform 3rd Echelon as to the current strength of IBDs. The latter, who were the central authority on posting and transferring personnel, were then responsible for requesting additional reinforcements from the War Office.⁶⁷⁹

It became clear after first contact with the German Army however that pre-war planning was too complicated and vague to work under the strenuous conditions of industrial warfare. Several problems emerged throughout 1914 and, though procedure was adapted to facilitate the movement of reinforcements, the system almost collapsed. Firstly, frontline units failed to provide accurate and consistent casualty reports throughout the first few months of the war. This was critical as, without this information, it was impossible for the Adjutant General and his staff to determine what reinforcements were needed by battalions. Despite requests for casualty lists on 27th August, none were rendered until 31st August, eight days after the Battle of Mons began. Although the Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Sir Nevil Macready, noted in his memoirs that a 'rough estimate' of 15,000 casualties could be drawn up by 26th August, 3rd Echelon noted in mid-September that casualty lists were coming in very slowly.⁶⁸⁰

In part, this was caused by COs not understanding the process of reporting casualties and requesting reinforcements. Although *FSR 1909* noted that reinforcements were automatically demanded by submitting casualty reports up the chain of command to the Adjutant General, COs frequently requested reinforcements from a variety of different authorities. For instance, the 5th Cavalry Brigade wired 3rd Echelon on 7th September for

⁶⁷⁹ Definition of posting and transfers were vague, as it varied across the BEF. However, posting refers to a soldier being sent from one unit to another within the same regiment, whilst a transfer entailed men being sent from their unit to another in a different regiment or arm. See: *FSR, 1909, Part II*, pp. 56-60 and 164; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Army*, pp. 40-41.

⁶⁸⁰ TNA, WO95/25, Adjutant General war diary, 27th and 31st August 1914; TNA, WO95/43, 3rd Echelon war diary, 27th August and 12th September 1914; TNA, WO95/646, II Corps AQMG war diary, 19th September 1914; TNA, WO95/3972, IGC AQMG war diary, 7th September 1914; Macready, Nevil, *Annals of an Active Life, Vol. I* (London: Hutchinson, 1924), pp. 204-205.

additional officers for the 2nd Dragoons (Royal Scots Greys), whilst there is evidence to suggest that officers directly contacted their reserve unit in the UK.⁶⁸¹ This forced Macready to amend and clarify the process on 29th August, ordering COs to inform GHQ of estimated losses through the quickest method, divided between killed, wounded and missing. This would be followed by a precise report to 3rd Echelon, who would, after clarification, forward an exact list to the War Office. Despite this, units continued to adopt numerous methods of informing 3rd Echelon of casualties, which led to delays and an overlapping of reinforcement demands. Macready, in an attempt to mitigate these issues, continued to alter, simplify and disseminate policy in October, November and December, stating all demands to replace casualties and routine wastage must be sent to the Adjutant General, who would forward it to 3rd Echelon.⁶⁸² Despite improvements, it is notable that some formations, such as 5th Division, were reprimanded for this as late as April 1916, as battalions continued to ignore proper channels and request reinforcements directly from 3rd Echelon.⁶⁸³

This process was difficult to complete however during complex and lengthy engagements, such as the battle and retreat from Mons in August 1914. After II Corps took the brunt of the German offensive on 23rd August along the canal at Mons, the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir John French, ordered the BEF to withdraw once he discovered the French Fifth Army on his flank had begun to fall back. This led to a general retreat that lasted until 5th September, when the BEF stopped at a staging area South-East of Paris, roughly 200 miles away. During this period, I and II Corps became separated by the forest of Mormal and were separately engaged by German forces. Although Lieutenant-General Sir Douglas Haig successfully withdrew I Corps after encountering elements of the German vanguard, he failed to support II Corps as ordered, which was harassed by the enemy for three days. Without instructions from GHQ or assistance from I Corps, the GOC II Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, ordered a defensive stand at Le Cateau on 26th August. Although Smith-Dorrien achieved a resounding victory that enabled II Corps to disengage and withdraw,

⁶⁸¹ TNA, WO95/3792, IGC war diary, 7th September 1914; TNA, WO293/2, ACI 119, 12th February 1915; TNA, WO293/3, ACI 212, 24th September 1915.

⁶⁸² TNA, WO95/25 Adjutant General war diary, Extracts of Routine Order (RO), 19th September 1914, RO248, 26th October 1914 and RO399, 4th December 1914; TNA, WO95/43, 3rd Echelon war diary, 20th-21st September and 1st November 1914; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 45 and 51.

⁶⁸³ TNA, WO95/1518, 5th Division AQMG war diary, 14th April 1916.

pressure was not let up until 29th August, when the bulk of the BEF, except the 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Brigades, had a day to rest and refit.⁶⁸⁴

Even then, units remained disorganised, as a substantial number of soldiers were separated from their units during the retreat. Roughly 3,500 stragglers had been collected by 31st August at the advance base at Le Mans, with more arriving each day. It was not until 12th September that all stragglers were fully accounted for and returned to their units, as many were considered temporarily unfit.⁶⁸⁵ This made the process of producing accurate casualty reports difficult and explains the initial delay discussed earlier. Yet, this was not a unique experience, as service conditions did not improve throughout 1914. Despite a relatively quiet advance to the River Aisne between 6th and 13th September, the BEF was caught in a 'desperate spiral of escalating violence' until the end of the First Battle of Ypres in November 1914.⁶⁸⁶ Units remained under considerable strain throughout and could not provide regular casualty reports, which forced the Adjutant General and rearward services to work from estimated losses. This made it difficult to ascertain the precise number of reinforcements needed by each unit on the frontline and, in turn, from the UK.

Further confusion was caused by an overlap of responsibilities between the Adjutant General, the Deputy Adjutant General (DAG) at 3rd Echelon and the IGC regarding the call up and movement of reinforcements. As mentioned, the Adjutant General was responsible for calling up reinforcements from the base whilst the IGC was in control of moving personnel up to the 'rendezvous point', normally located at railheads. In turn, the IGC informed the DAG at 3rd Echelon, who then indented the War Office for the number of men needed to refill IBDs. Logistically, this was a pull system, where members of the General Staff, such as the Adjutant General, controlled the movement of manpower and material under their command and pulled them across from IBDs and, subsequently, the UK, to where it was needed.⁶⁸⁷

These vague arrangements however caused confusion over the control of manpower on the Lines of Communication, as the IGC, Major-General F. S. Robb, repeatedly tried to

⁶⁸⁴ Beckett, Ian F. W., Bowman, Timothy, and Connelly, Mark, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 214-219 and 224-228; Edmonds, J. E., *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1914, Vol. I* (London: Macmillan, 1923), pp. 239-240.

⁶⁸⁵ TNA, WO95/4116, No. 2 large rest camp report, September 1914; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 45.

⁶⁸⁶ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 220-229.

⁶⁸⁷ Brown, Ian Malcolm, *British Logistics on the Western Front, 1914-1919* (London: Praeger Publishers, 1993), p. 47.

predict and fulfil the manpower needs of the BEF without orders. For example, Macready had authorised the IGC to move the 'first reinforcement' to the advance base at Amiens on 25th August. Robb, however, planned their movement to Creil four days later, presumably to meet the BEF as it retreated southwards. This caused conflict with Macready, who had already told Robb on 23rd August that he was not in a position, located at the rear and unaware of the situation on the frontline, to order the movement of men and material into forward positions. Although Macready belatedly agreed to it, he reminded Robb on 30th August and again the following day that he was not to forward reinforcements until the order was given, as units could not accept drafts during a retreat and needed a 24 hour break in one location before this could occur.⁶⁸⁸

Robb, however, protested against these restrictions. He wrote to both the CIGS and the Quartermaster-General (QMG) in the UK, General Sir A. J. Murray and General Sir John Cowans respectively, to advocate a 'push system', which relied upon a senior administrative commander to anticipate frontline demands and forward sufficient material in advance to cover it. He told Murray that he was aligned with Lord Kitchener regarding the need to anticipate regimental demand and had done all he could to facilitate this. Noting the example above and another attempt to push reinforcements from Rouen, he argued GHQ were unable to accept them and that, 'the factor of time in filling up gaps of all sorts is governed by the ability of the unit to receive and not of the L. of. C [Lines of Communication] to send up [original emphasis]'. This, as well as the daily 'Kaleidoscopic' changes implemented by GHQ, had been the problem and Robb declared he would continue to push reinforcements forward.⁶⁸⁹

Rather than a clash of personalities, this problem was caused by the broader, systematic issue within administrative command at GHQ. As Ian Malcolm Brown notes, *FSR 1909* had separated administrative and command duties, with the Commander-in-Chief ultimately responsible for the operational command and success of the army in the field. He was not burdened with maintaining the BEF, as this was delegated under the British General

⁶⁸⁸ TNA, WO95/25, letter from Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Sir Nevil Macready, to IGC, Major-General F. S. Robb, 24th August 1914; TNA, WO95/3972, IGC AQMG war diary, 24th-25th and 29th-30th August and 1st September 1914; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 45-46; Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, p. 204.

⁶⁸⁹ TNA, WO79/63, Letter from Robb to CIGS, General Sir A. J. Murray, 16th or 17th September 1914; TNA, WO159/2, Letter from Robb to QMG at War Office, General Sir John Cowans, 6th September 1914; Brown, *British Logistics*, p. 47; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 46-47.

Staff system to the Adjutant General and QMG, who were broadly responsible for the supply and control of personnel and material, respectively. Although this created a two-tier staff system where administrative and command staff rarely coordinated, it did establish a clear chain of command, as both the Adjutant General and QMG knew their position and responsibilities within the General Staff model. Yet, the IGC was not part of this system. Instead, he was directly under the Commander-in-Chief and remained independent, with his own headquarters and 'pseudo-staff' on the Lines of Communication. However, to effectively organise the latter and maintain a clear relationship with the General Staff at GHQ, he needed to be part of it. Until then, he became, 'a fourth senior staff officer, on par with the CGS [Chief of General Staff], AG [Adjutant General] and the QMG, but without the recognition that he was a part of the General Staff and part of a complex push-pull supply system'.⁶⁹⁰

The problems this arrangement caused became evident during the retreat from Mons. On 29th August, GHQ ordered the establishment of new bases at the Western ports of St. Nazaire and Nantes, as the BEF had retreated south, away from its own Lines of Communication. Yet, the IGC and his staff, at their own headquarters on the original Lines of Communication, knew little of the developing military situation. Based upon intermittent news filtering through, Robb believed the German advance towards the Seine constituted a military emergency. As a result, he, in liaison with the War Office and Admiralty, hastily evacuated all material and personnel from Le Havre and Rouen to the new bases on the Loire that evening. At Rouen, 6,000 reinforcements were sent by rail to the new advance base at Le Mans on 30th August, whilst 12,000 reinforcements at Le Havre were evacuated by ship, remaining at sea until 3rd September. Although the Commandant of Le Havre, Colonel. F. J. Parker, wished to send personnel via rail and road, Robb believed the security of these routes had been compromised. This decision was significant, as Macready had requested reinforcements on 2nd September due to a lull in the fighting. Unsurprisingly, Robb was unable to comply, as most reinforcements were still at sea and, upon arrival, had to be unloaded, reorganised, and brought up the new Lines of Communication.⁶⁹¹ Overall, this was a serious

⁶⁹⁰ TNA, WO95/25, letter from Macready to Robb, 24th August 1914; Brown, *British Logistics*, pp. 46-48 and 53; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 46-47.

⁶⁹¹ TNA, WO95/3972, IGC AQMG war diary, 2nd September 1914; TNA, WO95/3949, Report on change of bases from the River Seine to the River Loire, [ND] c. December 1914; TNA, WO95/3972, IGC AQMG war diary, 25th, 29th-30th August and 1st-3rd September 1914; TNA, WO159/2, Letter from Robb to Cowans, 6th September 1914; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 46-47.

breakdown in the administrative command of the BEF, as it delayed the deployment of reinforcements at a critical moment.

Despite Robb's attempts to influence opinion at the War Office, these problems were resolved by September, as he belatedly agreed to subordinate himself to both the Adjutant General and QMG on areas that fell within their authority. Thus, only the Adjutant General and, by extension, 3rd Echelon, could control the movement of reinforcements. The former stipulated the number of reinforcements needed by each unit, whilst the latter ordered them to the correct location and requested additional manpower from the War Office to refill IBDs. Whilst these changes failed to tackle the broader problem of the two-tier staff system, the solution did recognise the Adjutant General as the sole authority on the movement of reinforcements.⁶⁹²

Though staff procedures were altered to rectify the most evident problems in *FSR 1909*, active service conditions made the physical process of moving reinforcements up to units extremely difficult. Discounting the problems this created for reporting casualties, three significant challenges emerged. Firstly, due to the intensity of fighting and lack of units immediately available to expand the BEF, it was impossible to rotate units out of the frontline to rest and refit. With only a handful of battalions stationed on the Lines of Communication at any one time, most units had to serve on the frontline until they reached a clear breaking point. Even then, most were transferred into GHQ or corps reserve for a short period of time before they were sent back to the frontline.⁶⁹³ For example, the 1st Gordon Highlanders remained in action after losing three quarters of its strength at Le Cateau on 26th August 1914. The CO, Lieutenant-Colonel F. H. Neish, did not receive the order to retreat from 8th Brigade, which left the battalion, along with several companies of the 2nd Royal Scots and 2nd Royal Irish Regiment, isolated at Audencourt. Although they were able to repel successive German assaults, they were ambushed and captured the following night when attempting to rejoin the BEF. Overall, an estimated 500 men of the 1st Gordon Highlanders were taken prisoner and only five officers and 215 men were present the next day with 3rd Division. However, with

⁶⁹² TNA, WO95/43, 3rd Echelon war diary, 24th-25th August and 20th-21st September 1914; TNA, WO163/44, 30th Army Council meeting, 8th September 1914; Brown, *British Logistics*, pp. 53-54; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 47; Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, p. 210.

⁶⁹³ TNA, WO95/3972, IGC AQMG war diary, 2nd September and 25th October 1914 and summary of units on the Lines of Communication, 1st November 1914; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 52.

no units in reserve, it continued to serve until 12th September, when the 1st Devonshire Regiment could relieve it. Although the time spent in GHQ reserve enabled the 1st Gordon Highlanders to integrate the 494 reinforcements it received between 4th and 20th September, it was rotated back into 3rd Division on 30th September. It was replaced by the weary 2nd Suffolk Regiment, which had been in action since Mons and needed time to digest its latest draft of 168 men. There it remained until 24th October, when it was replaced by the 2nd Royal Irish Regiment, which had been nearly annihilated at Le Pilly on 19th October, after suffering 578 casualties.⁶⁹⁴

Even with the arrival of additional regular divisions, Territorial formations and the Indian Corps, which expanded the BEF from 163,987 in August to 224,647 in November, units could not be rotated into reserve due to the intense fighting around Ypres and Neuve Chapelle between October and November.⁶⁹⁵ Initially, French wanted to use the Indian Corps and Territorials to relieve a significant proportion of his forces that had been in action since Mons. The Indian Corps, amounting to 15,000 Indian and 5,000 British soldiers, took over 11 miles, or 34 percent, of the British line on 23rd October, whilst French selected six of his eight Territorial battalions to relieve the depleted 2nd Royal Irish Regiment, 1st Cheshire Regiment, 1st Dorsetshire Regiment, 2nd Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment) and 2nd Wiltshire Regiment in late October. Yet, successive British and German assaults around Ypres had significantly weakened the BEF, which forced French to use Territorials and the depleted regulars to plug the growing gaps. Even with the arrival of 78,583 reinforcements by 31st October, it could not match the monthly wastage rate, estimated at 28 percent. For instance, III Corps was 7,200 below its establishment in November, whilst 75 of 84 battalions had a strength of 300 or less, with 18 having no more than 100 men.⁶⁹⁶ Thus, the arrival of Territorials and the Indian Corps were critical. Although they were unable to

⁶⁹⁴ TNA, WO95/1421, 1st Gordon Highlanders war diary, 26th-27th August, 5th-7th and 14th September 1914; TNA, WO95/1424, 2nd Suffolk Regiment war diary, 23rd August - 30th September 1914; Edmonds, *Military Operations, 1914, Vol. I*, pp. 174-175, 188, 194-195, 225-226 and 420; Edmonds, J. E., *Military operations, France and Belgium 1914, Vol. II* (London: Macmillan, 1925), pp. 86 and 208.

⁶⁹⁵ Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 51.

⁶⁹⁶ TNA, WO95/683, III Corps AQMG war diary, 5th November 1914; TNA, WO95/3972, IGC AQMG war diary, 27th-28th October 1914; TNA, WO159/2, 'Memorandum on wastage', 1st January 1915; Edmonds, *Military Operations, 1914, Vol. II*, pp. 252 and 467; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 51; Morton-Jack, George, *The Indian Army on the Western Front: India's Expeditionary Force to France and Belgium in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 148-153.

relieve regular units as planned, their presence on the frontline prevented the BEF from collapsing in 1914.⁶⁹⁷

Under these circumstances, however, it was extremely difficult to move reinforcements up to the frontline. Trench systems were limited and, with units locked in combat, there were no secure or protected routes. Although reinforcements were normally brought up at night, in a similar manner to how reliefs were organised, it was complicated by the constant movement of units.⁶⁹⁸ As Alison Hine points out, the practice of moving units between different formations was confusing for staff at IBDs, who sent reinforcements to the wrong part of the line.⁶⁹⁹ Notably, II Corps, composed of 3rd and 5th Division, had less than half its normal allotment of troops on 31st October. Whilst it retained parts of 7th, 13th and 15th Brigades, the remainder of these formations, along with the 8th, 9th and 14th Brigades, were attached to the Cavalry and Indian Corps.⁷⁰⁰ Eventually, all six infantry brigades were reorganised into seven independent groups by GHQ and used to relieve different parts of the line. At the same time, a composite force was created on 30th October and given to the CO 2nd Brigade, Major-General Sir Edward Bulfin, when German forces captured Zandvoorde from the 3rd Cavalry Division. Ordered to lead a counterattack with French support the next day, his force contained two battalions of his original command, the 2nd Royal Sussex Regiment and 1st Northamptonshire Regiment, as well as the 2nd Grenadier Guards, 1st Irish Guards, 2nd Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and 2nd Gordon Highlanders from the 2nd and 7th Divisions.⁷⁰¹ Though a necessity due to the dwindling strength of formations, the consistent movement of units and their use within *ad hoc* formations significantly slowed down the process of forwarding reinforcements.

Collectively, this temporarily blocked the flow of manpower to the frontline. The 'first reinforcement' sent across with the BEF had been absorbed by 6th September and, on the same day, the 'second reinforcement' arrived at the advance base in Melun. Although the 485 officers and 31,888 other ranks drafted from England covered the estimated 28,307 casualties sustained in August and September, there was a significant build-up of manpower at IBDs. On

⁶⁹⁷ Morton-Jack, *The Indian Army*, p. 152.

⁶⁹⁸ TNA, WO95/3972, IGC AQMG war diary, 25th October 1914.

⁶⁹⁹ Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 52.

⁷⁰⁰ TNA, WO95/3972, Distribution state of 3rd and 5th Divisions, 31st October 1914.

⁷⁰¹ Becke, A. F., *Order of Battle of Divisions, Part I: The Regular British Divisions* (London: HMSO, 1935), pp. 28, 36 and 84; Edmonds, *Military Operations, 1914, Vol. II*, pp. 182, 293, 298, 383-384 and 523.

3rd September, there were over 10,000 reinforcements at St. Nazaire, with more on route. This had grown to 15,000 men by mid-September and, despite men being forwarded to the advance bases, it expanded to 21,300 over the next two weeks. The build-up of reinforcements stretched accommodation to its limits, which forced 3rd Echelon to request a temporary suspension on drafts coming over from the UK. Even with these temporary measures coming into force at the end of September, there was still an estimated 18,500 reinforcements at the base by late October. Although the War Office were able to dispatch 108,310 reinforcements to cover the estimated 85,046 casualties in the BEF by 10th November, it was not until December, once active campaigning ceased, that units started to rebuild.⁷⁰² Whilst GHQ needed to consider several problems related to reinforcement policy, they should be credited for dealing with the most evident flaws they encountered in 1914. Macready had swiftly altered several major faults in reinforcement procedure and managed to keep reinforcements flowing to the BEF, despite the immense difficulties caused by inadequate pre-war planning and the intensity of industrial warfare.

The pause in operations between late 1914 and early 1915 enabled the BEF to recuperate and reorganise. Whilst reinforcements periodically arrived to rebuild units, the BEF was restructured into the First and Second Armies and was placed under the command of Haig and Smith Dorrien, respectively. Although there were evident issues with this, such as the lack of British commanders who had experience in commanding corps and army formations, it was vital for administrating the BEF, which had expanded from five to 16 divisions. This included the 8th, 27th and 28th Divisions, which had been created from the remaining regular forces spread across the empire, as well as the 1st Canadian Division and several other Territorial and New Army formations. This coincided with a significant reorganisation of the allied line, which saw the BEF reduce the amount of frontline it held from 36 to 21 miles. As a result, GHQ was able to keep one corps in reserve and regularly

⁷⁰² TNA, WO95/596, I Corps AQMG war diary, 4th-5th September 1914; TNA, WO95/683, III Corps AQMG war diary, 6th September 1914; TNA, WO95/3792, letter from Macready to Robb, 19th October 1914 and IGC war diary, 2nd-27th September and 25th October 1914; *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire in the Great War* (London: HMSO, 1922), p. 253; Edmonds, *Military Operations, 1914, Vol. II*, p. 467; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 45 and 51.

relieve several divisions at once from frontline duties, which eliminated one of the key problems experienced thus far.⁷⁰³

Whilst the BEF went into 1915 numerically stronger, it had to adapt to the challenges of trench warfare, which persisted until the German Spring Offensive in March 1918. During this period, the primary concern of GHQ was to increase the speed in which reinforcements arrived at the frontline. Whilst the system had functioned in the first few months of war, it was far from efficient. The success of any future offensive relied upon quickly reinforcing frontline units, as this was essential to sustaining operations. Yet, there was no simple solution to this, as the reinforcement system was formed of two separate, but interconnected parts, which had their own problems. The first part was the method of calling up, accommodating, and preparing reinforcements from the UK for the frontline. Due to the use of the pull system, where reinforcements were forwarded after a request by the Adjutant General, it was vital to perfect methods such as casualty reporting so reinforcements could be immediately requested. The second problem was the method of delivering reinforcements to the frontline during periods of inactivity and campaigning. Though GHQ adapted to changes in trench and, eventually, open warfare, the process of achieving this was fraught with difficulties.

The primary problem faced by Macready in 1914 was the process of moving reinforcements. Due to the difficulty of obtaining casualty reports from frontline units, he, as well as 3rd Echelon, struggled to dispatch the correct number of reinforcements to the frontline and, subsequently, call up drafts from the UK to replace them. As a result, this became the focus of 'A' branch for the next 18 months, until the beginning of the Battle of the Somme. Overall, this process can be split into routine and battle wastage. As mentioned, routine wastage was caused by sickness and minor day-to-day casualties, which was reported directly to the Adjutant General. From March 1915, divisions forwarded daily casualties to Army headquarters, which collated the information and sent it onto both 3rd Echelon and the Adjutant General. Simultaneously, corps headquarters were to submit daily requests for reinforcements to 3rd Echelon, who decided how many soldiers were forwarded to the BEF. If the number demanded by battalions were deemed too small, 3rd Echelon had the authority

⁷⁰³ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 229-230; Edmonds, J. E, *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1915, Vol. I* (London: Macmillan, 1927), pp. 4-6 and 8-9.

to wait until a larger number was needed. If the number was larger than what was available at IBDs, it requested the excess from the War Office. This was important, as it reduced the amount of correspondence sent to the Adjutant General and firmly established 3rd Echelon as the chief authority on reinforcements. Whilst it deferred to the Adjutant General, especially during active operations, they were responsible for calling up reinforcements from the UK and posting reinforcements to units according to the broader military situation. Coupled with their oversight of transfers and attachments, they had complete control over the movement and allocation of reinforcements on a day-to-day basis.⁷⁰⁴

In contrast, providing up-to-date information on wastage during active operations was much harder. Despite the importance Macready attached to it, he provided little guidance on how to overcome the inherent difficulties in this process. The primary method of collecting and passing information up to the Adjutant General was via a chain of advance report centres. Thus, a small section of 'A' staff at the divisional, corps and army level created report centres in forward positions. From here, they collected information on casualties and passed it up the chain of command to an advance report centre for the Adjutant General's office, who forwarded reports to GHQ regarding overall losses. It is unclear how this operated in practice. Macready had not specified the role of 'A' staff within the different layers of military command and the limited duties assigned were contradictory. For instance, 'A' staff were also told to directly inform GHQ of any significant developments that may affect operations, which created two streams of communication regarding casualties. This could lead to critical information not reaching senior members of 'A' branch, as well as unsubstantiated information being forwarded onto GHQ.⁷⁰⁵

Unsurprisingly, this led to confusion during the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915. At the advance report centre for the Adjutant General's Office, the Assistant Adjutant General, Colonel B. H. Cooke, and Deputy Assistant Adjutant General (DAAG), Captain A. C. Jeffcoat, struggled to piece together the casualties sustained by I, IV and Indian Corps between 10th and 14th March 1915. Bar the Indian Corps, formations had not confirmed their

⁷⁰⁴ TNA, WO95/25, Memoranda on 'A' branch Staff Duties in Army headquarters and casualty and reinforcement reports, 21st February and 17th March 1915; TNA, WO95/43, 3rd Echelon war diary, 1st March 1915; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 71 and 74; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 173-174.

⁷⁰⁵ TNA, WO95/25, Advance report centre war diary and battle reports, 10th-14th March 1915; TNA, WO95/181, First Army AQMG war diary, 9th March 1915; TNA, WO95/707, IV Corps operations order no. 10, 7th March 1915.

losses on 10th March with Cooke or Jeffcoat, leaving them uncertain about the number of casualties sustained. To expediate the process and ascertain losses at the regimental level, both travelled to the headquarters of First Army, I and IV Corps, as well as 1st, 2nd, 7th and 8th Divisions, over the next four days. Yet, Cooke and Jeffcoat found little more than vague reports or rumours. On 11th March, I Corps had 'no intimation' of casualties and guessed that 2nd Division had lost 600 to 800 men across its battalions. With no other information, Jeffcoat was forced to assume these losses were concentrated in either the 2nd South Staffordshire Regiment or the 1st King's Royal Rifle Corps, as they had led the initial advance. On 12th March, the 7th Division could only confirm the casualties of four battalions, whilst 8th Division guessed that every battalion had lost half their strength. A day later, they could only estimate the strength of two brigades. Even this was imprecise as divisional 'A' staff, who had not heard from their frontline units, based their estimates upon a combination of fighting strength returns, field ambulance admissions and verbal quartermaster reports. Thus, most reports were unreliable and, as First Army noted, its estimate of 463 officer and 13,120 other rank casualties was, 'very much a matter of guesswork'.⁷⁰⁶

Despite these difficulties, Hine claims the system was effective, as the number of reinforcements received from the UK had exceeded total casualties by 18th March. Yet, with only vague reports, the Adjutant General could not cover losses at the regimental level. Although Cooke accurately predicted the 2nd Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) and 2nd Middlesex Regiment needed at least 600 men each on 12th March, he mistakenly requested 400 for both the 2nd East Lancashire Regiment and 1st Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment). Both were incorrect, as the estimated number of casualties were updated the following day to 225 and 565, respectively. Whilst this was outside Cooke's control and requests could be amended as additional reports came through, the lack of credible and timely information undermined the efficiency of the system and delayed the process of reinforcing frontline units.⁷⁰⁷

Overall, the failure to collect accurate casualty information can be attributed to two problems. The first was with the inexperience of 'A' staff and the uncertainty over their role.

⁷⁰⁶ TNA, WO95/25, Advance report centre war diary and battle reports, 10th-14th March; TNA, WO95/181, First Army AQMG war diary, 13th March 1915; TNA, WO95/1680, 8th Division AQMG war diary, 14th March 1915; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 72.

⁷⁰⁷ TNA, WO95/25, Battle reports, 12th-13th March 1915; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 73.

Without guidance from Macready, there was no clear system in place for collecting information and, on numerous occasions, 'A' staff at both 7th and 8th Divisions waited for frontline units to send casualty reports. Unsurprisingly, battalions locked in action were unlikely to forward regular casualty reports and, as Cooke and Jeffcoat emphasised, it was the responsibility of 'A' staff at the brigade and divisional level to push forward and obtain the information themselves. This advice was ignored, however, as 8th Division was reprimanded for inactivity on 14th March and ordered to send staff officers to every unit before the end of the day. Even then, 'A' staff at 7th and 8th Divisions presented losses by brigade, rather than battalion, which was useless for calling up reinforcements. Though reports from medical services could have supplemented or remedied this, they were only rendered in full after an engagement, as it would ensure greater accuracy and reduce the administrative strain placed upon medical staff.⁷⁰⁸

In part, the difficulties experienced were caused by the small number of fully trained staff officers available to the BEF in 1915. The Staff Colleges at Camberley and Quetta had only trained a small number of officers before August 1914 and, on the outbreak of war, there was only 1,433 available for service. The quality of instruction was also questionable, as it lacked academic rigour and avoided topics such as basic administrative duties. Overall, this total could not support the rapidly expanding BEF, especially when the number of staff officers appointed to frontline command positions in 1914 and 1915 are considered. This dilution led to formations only having partially-trained staff, which caused basic errors to occur. For example, the bulk of 'A' staff were not sent to advance report centres, but retained at divisional, corps and army headquarters to continue routine work. Even then, 'A' staff were distracted from their duties, as they were reportedly harassed by General Staff Liaison Officers, who attempted to collect and forward information onto GHQ. Though critical, this problem took a considerable time to fix, as the training of staff officers did not receive adequate attention until Haig became Commander-in-Chief at the end of 1915. Until then, officers selected for 'A' branch work had to learn their duties on a six week course held at GHQ or 'on the job' at their new appointment.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁸ TNA, WO95/25, RO 399, 4th December 1914 and battle reports, 11th-14th March 1915; TNA, WO95/45, 3rd Echelon war diary and appendices, 1st March 1915.

⁷⁰⁹ TNA, WO95/25, Advance report centre war diary, 17th March 1915; Bowman, Timothy and Connelly, Mark, *The Edwardian Army: Recruiting, Training, and Deploying the British Army, 1902-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University

The second problem was the poor state of British communications in early 1915, which undermined the ability of formations to collect and report casualties. Historians have demonstrated the negative impact this had on operations at Neuve Chapelle, focusing on how Haig and other commanders were unable to convert the tactical victory into a general breakout.⁷¹⁰ As Brian Hall explains, the BEF's communications system had originally been designed for open warfare and, in 1914, principally consisted of motorcycles and motorcars. No longer feasible in trench warfare, this was replaced with, 'telephonic and telegraphic communication among army, corps and divisional headquarters.'⁷¹¹ Whilst at risk of being cut, the most hazardous area of communications was between battalion and brigade headquarters. Signallers and Linesman made attempts to lay down and repair telephonic lines between them, but it was impossible to maintain during an offensive. Thus, communication between battalion and brigade headquarters became dependent upon messengers traversing the battleground, which could take several hours. Even if messengers were not killed and able to reach the safety of their own line, the delay impeded the collection of 'real-time information' needed for prompt action. Whilst this made it difficult for commanders to assess the progress and success of offensives, it severely curtailed the ability of units and 'A' staff to collect and communicate accurate information up the chain of command regarding casualties.⁷¹²

Though Neuve Chapelle was a considerable challenge, it did provide 'A' staff at GHQ with an understanding of fighting conditions in trench warfare. By 17th March, Cooke had outlined four key points regarding the battle and, by the end of the month, had circulated additional information on advance report centres and their role. All four points were sensible and tackled some of the problems outlined above. Notably, General Staff Liaison Officers

Press, 2012), pp. 33-34; Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, pp. 123-124; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 73 and 76.

⁷¹⁰ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 244-246; Marble, Sanders, *British Artillery on the Western Front in the First World War: 'The Infantry cannot do with a gun less'* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 74; Prior, Robin and Wilson, Trevor, *Command on the Western Front: The Military Career of Sir Henry Rawlinson, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), pp. 45-48; Sheffield, Douglas, *The Chief: Douglas Haig and the British Army* (London: Aurum, 2011), pp. 107-111.

⁷¹¹ Hall, Brian N., *Communications and British Operations on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 146.

⁷¹² Ibid, pp. 146-147; TNA, WO95/707, IV Corps' narrative of the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, 10th March 1915; Boraston, J. H and Bax, Cyril E. O., *The Eighth Division, 1914-1918* (London: Medici Society, 1926), pp. 24-25; Grayson, Richard S. (ed.), *The First World War diary of Noël Drury, 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers: Gallipoli, Salonika, the Middle East and the Western Front* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press for the Army Records Society, 2022), p. 133.

were discouraged from asking 'A' staff for updates, as representatives of the Adjutant General were to keep him and GHQ informed of casualties. Furthermore, divisions were to create an organised system of collecting casualty statistics in round numbers and, to facilitate this, divisions, corps and armies were advised to partially suspend routine administration during active operations. Whilst the point on an organised system is vague, Cooke had previously told the 7th, 8th, 27th and 28th Divisions that they had to send forward staff officers to collect information. He and Jeffcoat also attended conferences at First and Second Army to explain reinforcement procedure and, at the end of March, wrote a report on the role of the Advance Report Centre for the Adjutant General's office. Principally, it would be created near to each army undertaking action, with one staff officer visiting divisional headquarters to collect information. One would remain at the advance report centre to maintain consistent contact with 'A' staff at the divisional, corps and army level, as well as a corresponding staff officer at GHQ who had been relieved of all other routine work. In addition, they would prepare daily reports on losses and the number of reinforcements on route to the frontline.⁷¹³

Overall, this procedure was widely known by late April, as the process of reporting casualties in Second Army was relatively smooth during the Second Battle of Ypres. Inevitably, there was some confusion, as the BEF was on the defensive and attempting to adapt to the first use of gas. Nevertheless, an advance report centre had been established by 'A' branch on 28th April 1915 and staff were reporting casualties on a regular basis. Inevitably, some issues remained, but these were relatively minor. For instance, the 28th Division were reminded to obtain figures promptly, whilst V Corps was instructed to send an 'A' staff officer to each division. Yet, considering the scale of the assault and the use of inexperienced formations, including the 1st Canadian and 50th (Northumbrian) Divisions, this was a substantial improvement. The regular flow of information allowed the Adjutant General to request reinforcements from the War Office and rotated units in and out of the frontline to suit this. For example, the 1st Canadian Division had been in regular contact with Cooke and Jeffcoat from 23rd April and, over the next five days, had provided a detailed list of casualties split between individual battalions, totalling 5,000.⁷¹⁴

⁷¹³ TNA, WO95/25, Advance report centre war diary and attached communications, 15th-17th March 1915 and Adjutant General war diary, 25th March 1915; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Army*, pp. 73 and 75.

⁷¹⁴ TNA, WO95/25, Advance report centre war diary and battle reports, 28th April - 14th May 1915.

In part, this can be explained by the fortunate position of the 1st Canadian Division, who had 13 British and Canadian officers with Passed Staff College qualifications, as well as an additional three staff officers, including a DAAG, compared to British divisions. Thus, 'A' staff were able to operate 24 hours a day and maintain constant contact with their units.⁷¹⁵ Due to this, 75 officer and 1,840 other rank reinforcements had arrived by 28th April, with another 2,091 on route. The 1st Canadian Division was rotated into Second Army reserve to absorb their reinforcements and, on 7th May, another draft, formed of 85 officers and 1,427 cavalymen of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, Lord Strathcona's Horse and 2nd King Edward's Horse, arrived in France. Thus, due to swift reporting and prompt action by the War Office, the 1st Canadian Division had received an estimated 5,518 reinforcements in two weeks. This nearly covered the 6,122 casualties suffered and, by mid-May, the 1st Canadian Division had reorganised and were able to participate in the Battle of Aubers Ridge.⁷¹⁶

This process was continuously practiced and refined. Notably, little comment was made during the Battle of Loos in September 1915 and, within three days of the offensive commencing, an estimated 30,000 reinforcements were on route from the UK.⁷¹⁷ By the Battle of the Somme, 'A' staff across divisional, corps and army headquarters were able to produce detailed casualty reports at the height of industrial warfare. Between 1st and 31st July, Fourth Army predicted a total loss of 4,428 officers and 116,270 other ranks, which was roughly 5,000 short of total losses, recorded at 5,095 officers and 120,438 men. Considering this was within a four percent margin of error, 'A' staff had, within a relatively short space of time, become adept at producing accurate casualty reports.⁷¹⁸

Nevertheless, a part of this process was the ability of IBDs to quickly receive drafts from the UK and prepare them for the frontline. As mentioned, they were designed to hold, at all times, reinforcements equivalent to 10 percent of each units establishment. This could,

⁷¹⁵ Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, pp. 124 and 131; Duguid, A. F., *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919: From the Outbreak of the Great War to the Formation of the Canadian Corps, August 1914-September 1915, Vol. I, Part I* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), pp. 140, 398 and 434.

⁷¹⁶ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 4837, file 83, 1st Canadian Division AQMG war diary and memoranda on reinforcements, 20th April - 19th May 1915; TNA, WO95/25, Reports on strength and drafts for 1st Canadian Division, 29th-30th April and 2nd-6th May 1915; Cook, Tim, *At the Sharp End: Canadian's Fighting the Great War, 1914-1916, Vol. I* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2007), pp. 165-166, 172 and 176-177; Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces, Vol. I, Part I*, pp. 432-434.

⁷¹⁷ TNA, WO95/25, Adjutant General war diary, 30th September 1915.

⁷¹⁸ TNA, WO95/411, Fourth Army AQMG war diary, 31st July and 5th August 1916.

in theory, cover routine wastage and immediately provide battalions with a sizable number of reinforcements in active operations, until more arrived from the UK. Although this had been temporarily increased to 15 percent in 1914, this system struggled to function from 1915. Firstly, due to the rapid expansion of the BEF, there was a lack of accommodation at British bases, initially located at Le Havre and Rouen, to maintain the 15 percent margin. Although the location of IBDs simplified the movement of drafts on the Lines of Communication, as both Le Havre and Rouen were major logistical hubs, there was a finite amount of space that could be dedicated to housing reinforcements. Therefore, when the BEF expanded from 11 to 19 infantry and cavalry divisions between late 1914 and early 1915, GHQ had to reduce the percentage of reinforcements held from 15 to 10 in order to accommodate the extra GBDs and IBDs needed for each new division.⁷¹⁹

Whilst unfortunate, the larger problem facing GHQ was the inability to expand either base further to accommodate reinforcements for the large number of New Army, Territorial and Dominion divisions arriving throughout 1915. Therefore, GHQ was forced to select a new site for IBDs and, in February 1915, selected Étaples. Unlike other bases, there was enough land to continuously expand and it was connected to all parts of the British line via rail.⁷²⁰ Though positive, the base at Étaples did not become operational until June 1915 and, initially, prioritised the reception of IBDs for New Army divisions. As a result, IBDs for the 1st Canadian Division, as well as various Territorial divisions, had to remain in the UK. Drafts for these formations had to be processed by other IBDs and, as a result, could not be accommodated overnight. For example, Canadian reinforcements were processed by the 3rd GBD, but not accommodated in France until the creation of the Canadian General Base Depot (CGBD) in September 1915. Therefore, all reinforcements had to be immediately sent to the frontline, which disrupted 'A' branch's ability to build up a 10 percent reserve to cover wastage in several divisions.⁷²¹

⁷¹⁹ TNA, WO95/3953, IGC war diary, 2nd February 1915 and letter from IGC, General Sir J. A. P. Maxwell, to unknown officer, 14th February 1915; TNA, WO95/3972, letters between Macready and Maxwell, 19th and 21st October 1914; TNA, WO95/3973, IGC AQMG war diary, 8th January 1915.

⁷²⁰ TNA, WO95/3953, Telegram from Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir John French, to War Office, 31st January 1915; TNA, WO95/3973, IGC AQMG war diary, 8th January and 19th February 1915.

⁷²¹ TNA, WO95/3973, IGC AQMG war diary, 25th February 1915; Nicholson, G.W.L., *Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919: Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1962), pp. 229-230.

Whilst this problem began to ease as the Étaples Base expanded, the decision to provide accommodation equivalent to 10 percent of a unit's strength was redundant, as the reinforcement system was unable to maintain this ratio. As mentioned, the build-up of troops experienced throughout 1914 began to ease in December, once active campaigning had ended. Yet, the retention of 100 reinforcements per infantry battalion was too small to continuously cover wastage within the pull system. Overall, it was estimated that an infantry battalion sustained 107 'permanent' and 138 'temporary' casualties a month, based on figures between August 1914 and February 1915. Admittedly, this was an overestimation for routine wastage in trench warfare, as these figures included the high casualties sustained during the opening stages of the war. It does demonstrate however that the number of reinforcements held at each base were unlikely to cover the monthly wastage each battalion suffered.⁷²² This is important, as it took time to refill IBDs once reinforcements had been sent to the frontline. Initially, 'experience shews [sic] that 11 days elapse between the time these [reinforcements] are demanded and their embarkation, and three to five days elapse before they can be sent to the front'.⁷²³ It took longer for larger drafts and, from May 1915, reinforcements had to undertake additional training at the base before they were sent to the frontline.⁷²⁴ Therefore, if there were not enough reinforcements at each IBD to cover wastage, it could take up to three weeks for them to receive, prepare and dispatch replacements to the front. In that period, additional wastage would occur, and the process would repeat itself, ensuring IBDs were never refilled.⁷²⁵

Thus, it is not surprising that the number of reinforcements available at IBDs to cover wastage was consistently below the 10 percent margin. Between 8th March and 18th April 1915, divisions within Second Army had a very small pool of reinforcements to draw upon. 3rd Division had an average of 337 all ranks as reinforcements at its IBD each week, which equated to roughly 2.1 percent of its infantry establishment. This was similar to both 6th and 27th Divisions, which had an average of 415 and 407 reinforcements available per week, respectively. For the former, this equated to 2.1 percent of its infantry establishment, whilst it was slightly higher at 2.5 for the latter. This had unfortunate consequences during active

⁷²² TNA, WO159/2, 'Third memorandum on wastage', 16th April 1915.

⁷²³ TNA, WO95/3953, IGC AQMG war diary, 2nd February 1915.

⁷²⁴ Ibid, Telegram from French to War Office, 31st January 1915; For further details on reinforcement training, see chapter six.

⁷²⁵ TNA, WO95/3973, IGC AQMG war diary, 26th March 1915.

operations, as there was only a handful of reinforcements to cover initial losses. Indeed, Second Army had a total of 48 officers and 2,390 other ranks across its divisional IBDs on 18th April, which would have done little to cover the initial losses sustained at the Second Battle of Ypres, four days later.⁷²⁶ This had not improved by December 1915 and the Rouen Base Commandant, Brigadier-General A. G. Marrable, noted that IBDs held, on average, 4,000 to 5,000 reinforcements, rather than the 10 percent margin of 12,000.⁷²⁷ Whilst there could never be enough reinforcements at the base to cover battlefield wastage, maintaining the quota of 10 percent would have at least provided a pool of manpower to immediately draw upon.

Nevertheless, GHQ and the War Office did recognise that the small number of reinforcements held in France, as well as the lag between requesting, receiving and dispatching drafts, could impair active operations. Thus, two significant alterations were made to streamline reinforcement structure and procedure. Firstly, there was some modification to the pull system in the build up to the Somme Offensive. Whereas the War Office had previously waited for 3rd Echelon to request reinforcements, the Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General G. H. Fowke, requested in June 1916 that the War Office prepare, in advance, weekly drafts of 20,000 trained, or partially-trained, infantry reinforcements. The following day, Fowke made a further request for 1,000 reinforcements for the MGC, in anticipation of casualties during the upcoming offensive. Whilst the War Office was not able to fully comply and produce the numbers requested, they aimed on 26th June to dispatch 2,500 partially trained reinforcements before the end of the month, as well as two drafts of 15,000 men within the first fortnight of July. It is unclear whether this was part of the same draft, or additional to the one promised the week previous, which was to consist of 17,500 Territorials and 20,000 regular and New army reinforcements. Nevertheless, a total of 1,823 officers and 72,131 other ranks were sent out in June, which was 33,482 more reinforcements than those sent out in May. Whilst a proportion of the total was likely to cover the 1,778 officers and 35,434 casualties sustained throughout June, including the 8,430 men lost by the Canadian Corps during the Battle of Mount Sorrel, the War Office was able to build up a pool

⁷²⁶ TNA, WO95/279, Second Army AQMG war diary, 8th March-18th April 1915.

⁷²⁷ TNA, WO95/3693, Report on training by Rouen Base Commandant, Brigadier-General A. G. Marrable, 7th December 1915.

of reinforcements in France before the Battle of the Somme.⁷²⁸ Whilst the request from Fowke was late and the numbers provided by the War Office could not cover the estimated 60,000 casualties sustained on 1st July 1916, it did reduce the initial lag between ordering reinforcements and deploying them on the frontline.⁷²⁹

Nevertheless, the broader manpower situation became increasingly fraught after this and building up reinforcements before an offensive effectively became impossible, as the BEF was always below its establishment. Despite attempts by the CIGS, General Sir William Robertson, to send, 'every man we can lay hands on who is fit to go' during the Battle of the Somme, he told Haig in August 1916 that he could not bring the BEF up to full strength until at least October, once manpower acquired through the Military Service Act (No. 2), 1916, had been trained.⁷³⁰ This prediction was overly optimistic, however. As mentioned in chapter two, the number of men obtained through conscription were substantially below War Office expectations, and it took time to call up, enlist, train and dispatch reinforcements. Combined with the initial lag between passing the legislation in Parliament and the large number of men initially awarded exemption, estimated at 839,000 in the first three months of 1916, manpower became a scarce resource. The infantry in April 1917 were 31,409 below establishment and, by May 1917, the War Office estimated they were 250,000 recruits short of the estimated total needed to cover annual wastage.⁷³¹

The government were partially to blame, as they failed to create any clear, strategic manpower policies until December 1917. Yet, the introduction of conscription, as well as the ongoing debate over the distribution of men between industry and the army, enabled the War Office to accurately predict the number of reinforcements available for future operations.⁷³² Despite consistent complaints from Haig and the Army Council about the lack of manpower allocated to the military, the War Office informed GHQ that 356,800 British and

⁷²⁸ TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, April-June 1916; Edmonds, J E., *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1916, Vol. I* (London: Macmillan, 1932), pp. 242-243; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 108 and 117.

⁷²⁹ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 288.

⁷³⁰ TNA, WO293/5, ACI 1509, 2nd August 1916; letter from CIGS General Sir William Robertson to Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, 25th August 1916, quoted in Woodward, David R. (ed.), *The Military Correspondence of Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson, Chief of the General Staff, December 1915-February 1918* (London: The Bodley Head for the Army Records Society, 1989), p. 83.

⁷³¹ TNA, WO32/5091, Letter from Haig to War Office, 27th April 1917; TNA, WO162/28, 'The Position and Prospects of Recruiting' by Macready, 31st May 1917.

⁷³² Grievies, Keith, *The Politics of Manpower, 1914-1918* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

98,920 Dominion infantry reinforcements would be available for drafting at intervals between March and October 1917. In total, an estimated 377,443 British and 102,177 Dominion reinforcements were dispatched during the same period. Whilst this fell far below the 1.5 million and 940,000 men requested by Haig and the Army Council respectively for operations in 1917, a steady and predictable flow of reinforcements from the UK had been created.⁷³³ This does not, however, support Hine's broader argument that reinforcement system had shifted from 'demand to supply' or, more accurately, a pull to a push system. Whilst helping to streamline the reinforcement process, the system itself only appeared to be supplying manpower in advance due to its inability to bring the BEF up to its establishment. Although reinforcements were, in theory, pushed to the BEF once they were deemed trained, this was to fulfil outstanding demands already made through the pull system.⁷³⁴

In comparison, the Canadian Corps' favourable manpower situation enabled it to build up a reserve of reinforcements in advance of operations until 1918. At the end of the Somme Campaign in November 1916, the Canadian Corps was in a similar position to the BEF. It had suffered 24,029 casualties between September and November 1916 and lacked the manpower needed to properly rebuild.⁷³⁵ Specifically, the Canadian Corps was 296 officers and 9,368 other ranks short of its establishment at the beginning of November, with only 65 officers and 2,398 men available as reinforcements in the UK. Yet, unlike the BEF, the CEF had not depleted its manpower pool. Instead, the low number of reinforcements available was due to the poorly organised recruitment and reinforcement system in Canada and the UK, which had failed to train recruits in a timely manner. Remarkably, there were an estimated 80,000 fit, but untrained, Canadians in the UK at the time, which represented a large manpower reserve. Whilst the Canadian government did not adopt conscription until August 1917, which itself did not produce many drafts until the following May, the reorganisation of the reinforcement and training systems by the ministry of OMFC in early 1917 had greatly increased the number of reinforcements available. Even though this manpower reserve had dwindled by the end of 1917, the introduction of conscription and the belated decision to break up the 5th Canadian Division in December 1917 ensured a continuous stream of

⁷³³ Ibid, p. 75; TNA, WO32/5091, letters and memoranda (on reinforcements) between Haig and War Office, 1916-1917; WO33/881, Army Council meetings, January-December 1916; TNA, WO158/21, Letter from Haig to Robertson, 7th October 1916.

⁷³⁴ Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 177-179 and 297.

⁷³⁵ Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 167.

reinforcements until the armistice.⁷³⁶ This enabled Canadian authorities to continue building up reinforcements in advance of an offensive and, immediately before the Battle of Amiens in August 1918, the Canadians Corps was at full strength with 6,000 to 8,000 reinforcements nearby.⁷³⁷ Thus, due to the efforts of the OMFC to create a stronger manpower economy and reinforcement system, the Canadian Corps was able to maintain its strength and build up reinforcements in anticipation of an offensive for nearly two years longer than the BEF.

The second alteration changed the organisation of IBDs in 1916. As mentioned, reinforcements, upon arrival at IBDs, waited until they were needed by their battalion. This was a relatively rigid system, as reinforcements were, theoretically, requested and reserved for one battalion and division, regardless of the broader situation within the regiment or army. Changes made to legislation in the UK, including the Army (Amendment) Acts and removal of the Territorial Pledge in 1915 and 1916 respectively, enabled 'A' branch to transfer and post personnel to any unit within or outside their regiment. For example, No. 8 IBD, which processed reinforcements for the 8th Division, sent drafts to the 23rd Division and, to a much lesser extent, the 6th, 19th (Western) and 33rd Divisions, between January and June 1916.⁷³⁸ Yet, this method was inflexible and difficult to organise, as it was time consuming to discover the number of reinforcements available for each regiment across each Division. If unable to quickly locate a viable regimental source, this could lead to arbitrary transfers that unnecessarily disrupted the fragile regimental system.

Therefore, Fowke proposed in May to reorganise IBDs from a divisional to a regimental basis. Reinforcements would continue to be requested by unit but, from 1st July, would be allocated to an IBD that held reinforcements for their regiment. For instance, the newly dubbed 3rd IBD at Rouen housed reinforcements for 14 regular, Territorial and New Army

⁷³⁶ Imperial War Museum (IWM), 13802, Report by Inspector-General of the Infantry, Major-General E. A. A. Egerton, on 1st and 2nd Canadian Training Brigades, 30th-31st January 1917; Dennis, Patrick M., *Reluctant Warriors: Canadian Conscripts and the Great War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2017), pp. XI and 224-225; Granatstein, J. L and Hitsman, J. M, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 83-98; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 184-233; Morton, Desmond, *A Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada's Overseas Minister in the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1982), p. 101; Stewart, William F., 'Frustrated Belligerence: The Unhappy History of the 5th Canadian Division in the First World War', *Canadian Military History*, 22:4 (2015), pp. 31-46; Stewart, William F., *The Embattled General: Sir Richard Turner and the First World War* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), p. 15.

⁷³⁷ *Report of the Ministry: Overseas Military Forces of Canada 1918* (London: HMSO, 1919), pp. 297 and 333-334.

⁷³⁸ TNA, WO95/4185, 8th IBD war diary, January-June 1916; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Army*, p. 112.

battalions of the Somerset Light Infantry, Hampshire Regiment, Dorsetshire Regiment and Wiltshire Regiment. Although larger regiments, such as the King's (Liverpool Regiment), had an IBD to themselves, regiments from the same region and Home Command were grouped together.⁷³⁹ Overall, these changes enabled 'A' branch to quickly assess the total number of reinforcements available for each regiment, which made it easier to distribute them according to the broader military situation. For instance, the 4th Worcestershire Regiment received a draft of 61 men originally destined for two regular, eight Territorial and five New Army battalions affiliated to the regiment in October.⁷⁴⁰ The latter was clearly in response to a request from GHQ that battalions in the 29th Division, such as the 4th Worcestershire Regiment, should be given priority for reinforcements due to their low strength.⁷⁴¹

This led to large quantities of manpower being redirected at IBDs. For example, an analysis of reinforcements for the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment), based on a one third sample of all men earmarked for the battalion in their casualty books, shows 138 soldiers redirected to two regular, three territorial and six new army battalions between July and December 1916.⁷⁴² Collectively, this broadens our understanding of how the distinction between regular, Territorial and New Army units within the same regiment broke down. Although Peter Simkins claims that conscription and the high wastage rate broke down these differences in 1916, this is misleading. As argued in chapter two (and will be in six), these identities began to blend in 1915 and Fowke's decision to transition IBDs onto a regimental basis ensured 'A' branch no longer differentiated reinforcements by 1st July 1916.⁷⁴³

Overall, these changes were vital due the difficulties of maintaining the strength of some Territorial and New Army formations throughout 1915 and 1916, especially in Irish and Scottish regiments. Despite Craig French's claim that battalions in the 51st (Highland) Division were, 'supported relatively well [original emphasis]' by the reinforcement system from

⁷³⁹ TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 12th May 1916; TNA, WO95/3969, Letter from Deputy Adjutant General (DAG), Major-General Sir E. R. C. Graham, to Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General G. H. Fowke, 10th June 1916; TNA, WO95/3970, Letter from IGC to War Office, 31st July 1916; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 112-113 and 319-321.

⁷⁴⁰ TNA, WO95/4185, 29th IBD war diary, 31st October 1916.

⁷⁴¹ TNA, WO95/441, Fourth Army AQMG war diary, 28th October 1916.

⁷⁴² Liverpool Maritime Museum (LMM), King's Regiment Collection (KRC), KR/2/1-2, King's (Liverpool Regiment) casualty books, Vol. I and II; James, E. A., *British Regiments, 1914-1918* (London: Samson Books, 1978), pp. 51-53.

⁷⁴³ Simkins, Peter, 'The Four Armies, 1914-1918' in Chandler, David. G and Beckett, Ian F. W. (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 235.

October 1915, many Scottish units were either amalgamated or disbanded due to the unlikelihood of reinforcements coming over from their reserve unit in the UK. In the first six months of 1916 alone, the 1/4th Cameron Highlanders and 1/9th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were disbanded in February 1916, whilst the 1/4th and 1/5th Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) were amalgamated in March. The following month, the 6th and 7th Royal Scots Fusiliers, 7th and 8th King's Own Scottish Borderers, 10th and 11th Highland Light Infantry and 8th and 10th Gordon Highlanders were amalgamated, which led to the South African Brigade becoming an integral part of the 9th (Scottish) Division. The 1/5th and 1/6th Royal Scots, as well as the 1/5th and 1/6th Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), were amalgamated in May, while the 9th Royal Munster Fusiliers were disbanded in June, a mere six months after deployment.⁷⁴⁴ Other frontline units were withdrawn from frontline duties. After a request to disband the 19th Lancashire Fusiliers was rejected by Fowke in May 1916, it was withdrawn from frontline duties to become a pioneer battalion.⁷⁴⁵

Others, such as the 18th, 19th and 21st (1st, 2nd and 4th Public Schools) Royal Fusiliers, were disbanded to provide the BEF with much needed officer reinforcements. Similar to class corps in the TF, these battalions had recruited men who had a public school or university education and, by February 1915, had commissioned an estimated 1,700 men. Thus, to improve the supply of officer reinforcements, the 18th, 19th and 21st (1st, 2nd and 4th Public Schools) Royal Fusiliers were withdrawn from active service. Though they were not recognised as an OTC like the 1/28th London Regiment (Artists Rifles), men were fed into the cadet school system until units were depleted in April 1916. It is unclear why the 20th (3rd Public School) Royal Fusiliers did not follow the same course, but some suggest the CO, Lieutenant-Colonel C. H. Bennett, attempted to preserve the strength of his battalion by

⁷⁴⁴ TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, January-June 1916; French, Craig F., 'The 51st (Highland) Division During the First World War' (University of Glasgow PhD Thesis, 2006), pp. 91-93 and 111-112; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 109; Staunton, Martin, 'The Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Great War, 1914-19' (University College Dublin MA Thesis, 1986), pp. 226-228 and 231-232; Terence, Denman, *Ireland's Unknown soldiers: the 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992), pp. 629-630 and 641; Young, Derek Rutherford, 'Voluntary Recruitment in Scotland, 1914-1916' (University of Glasgow PhD Thesis, 2001).

⁷⁴⁵ TNA, WO95/441, Fourth Army AQMG war diary, 22nd May 1916; TNA, WO114/57, Regular army return, 26th July 1916; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 109; Latter, J. C., *The History of the Lancashire Fusiliers, 1914-1918, Vol. I* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1949), p. 131.

refusing to recommend soldiers for a commission. Others, such as Robert Graves, claimed the battalion was used to house soldiers deemed 'unsuited' for a commission.⁷⁴⁶

Regardless of the reasoning, the changes implemented by 'A' branch removed time consuming administrative processes and provided each regiment with a flexible manpower reserve that could respond to unforeseen demands. They could not, however, mitigate the growing manpower crisis in the UK, which reduced the number of reinforcements available from 1916. Therefore, 'A' branch was forced to transfer personnel between regiments at IBDs to sustain the BEF, especially during periods of extensive campaigning. As mentioned in chapter two, historians claim the regimental system had begun to break down in 1916. Whilst this interpretation is disputed, as reinforcement policy, designed by the War Office to preserve the regional integrity of regiments, was closely followed, few have considered the role of 'A' branch in this process. Bar Helen McCartney's analysis of transfers in the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment), other assessments rely upon anecdotal evidence to measure how transfers challenged or undermined the regimental system. It does not consider the regularity in which it was used, the extent it aligned to broader policy and how it impacted the overall composition of units.⁷⁴⁷

Therefore, table 4.1 calculates the composition of drafts received by the 1st Somerset light Infantry Regiment, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers, 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) and 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion. Based on the same one-third sample of personnel drawn from casualty books to assess regimental integrity in chapter two, drafts have been split into the categories of reinforcements, posted and transferred. Reinforcements include all recruits and

⁷⁴⁶ Hansard, House of Commons debate (HC), 15th February 1915, Vol. 69, cc. 900; Hansard, HC, 14th March 1916, Vol. 80, cc. 1876-1877; TNA, WO95/2423, 20th Royal Fusiliers war diary, February-July 1916; TNA, WO95/2427, 19th and 21st Royal Fusiliers war diary, February-May 1916; Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 63; Graves, Robert, *Good-Bye To All That: An Autobiography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929), p. 235; O'Neill, H. C., *The Royal Fusiliers in the Great War* (London: William Heinemann, 1922), pp. 14-17.

⁷⁴⁷ Beckett, Ian F. W., 'The Territorial Force', in Beckett, Ian F. W. and Simpson, Keith (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A social study of the British army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 137; French, David, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People c.1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 278; Fuller, J. G., *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1991), pp. 43-44; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 123-124; Hughes, Clive, 'The New Armies', in Beckett, Ian F. W. and Simpson, Keith (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A social study of the British army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 114; McCartney, Helen, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 58 and 66-70; Strachan, Hew, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 207-208.

Table 4.1: Composition of drafts received by four battalions, 1914-1918.⁷⁴⁸

	1st Somerset Light Infantry			1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers			1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment)			1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion			Total		
Date	Reinforcements (R)*	Posted (P)**	Transferred (T)***	R	P	T	R	P	T	R	P	T	Total R	Total P	Total T
1914	361	0	0	357	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	718	2	0
1915	576	0	0	590	3	1	129	0	0	22	0	0	1317	3	1
1916	384	12	75	345	0	28	305	11	0	369	8	2	1403	30	106
1917	398	5	2	314	4	44	384	1	99	217	1	134	1313	11	280
1918	502	100	64	133	1	5	394	23	26	73	2	57	1102	126	148
Total (%)	2221 (89.6)	117 (4.7)	141 (5.7)	1739 (95.2)	11 (0.5)	77 (4.3)	1212 (88.3)	34 (2.4)	128 (9.3)	681 (77.3)	11 (1.2)	193 (21.8)	5853 (89.2)	172 (2.6)	535 (8.2)

* Reinforcements includes all recruits and convalescents from UK and France

** Posted includes all soldiers and convalescents posted from another unit of the same regiment in France

*** Transferred includes all recruits and convalescents transferred from another regiment or arm whilst in, or on route to, France.

⁷⁴⁸ Buckinghamshire Archives (BA), TA/6/11-14, 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion casualty books, Vol. I-IV, 1915-1918; LMM, KRC, KR/2/1-3, King's (Liverpool Regiment) casualty books, Vol. I-III, 1915-1918; Somerset Archive (SA), Regimental Archive of the Somerset Light Infantry (RASLI), DD/SLI/9/4, 1st Somerset Light Infantry casualty book, 1914-1918; The Royal Welsh Fusiliers Museum (TRWFM), 276, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers casualty books, Vol. I and II, 1914-1918.

convalescents that were likely from regimental reserves in UK and France, whilst posted refers to soldiers and convalescents received from a frontline unit of the same regiment in France. Transfers include all recruits and convalescents transferred to another regiment or corps whilst in, or on route to, France.⁷⁴⁹

Overall, most drafts received by the Adjutant General and, by extension, 3rd Echelon, were sent onto their corresponding regiment, with reinforcements forming 91.2, 81.9 and 80.1 percent of the drafting total in 1916, 1917 and 1918, respectively.⁷⁵⁰ Unsurprisingly, the overall share in posting and transfers rose year on year to a height of 19.9 percent, as the manpower crisis took grip in the UK. Although there is no clear pattern regarding transfers at the regimental level, it was determined by several competing factors. As mentioned in chapter two, battlefield casualties influenced this process. For example, the 1st Somerset Light Infantry received the bulk of transfers in 1916, equating to 15.9 percent of their drafting total. The battalion had suffered 438 other rank losses on 1st July and, despite periodic rest, casualties continued to mount. The battalion lost 150 men during a gas attack in early August, whilst poor trench conditions led to the evacuation of 146 soldiers during the Battle of Transloy Ridges in late October.⁷⁵¹

Though important, 'A' branch had to balance this against the number of drafts available in the UK, the overall need for reinforcements within the regiment and BEF, as well as the role of a unit within an upcoming offensive.⁷⁵² For instance, 96.3 percent of personnel transferred to the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers in 1916 came as one draft in Mid-July. Although the battalion had endured relatively few casualties since 1st July, it was needed on the frontline for upcoming operations at Bazentin Ridge.⁷⁵³ In comparison, the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) received none. Although it suffered sizable losses during the third assault on Guillemont and the Battle of Morval in August and September 1916 respectively, the battalion was transferred to the quiet Ypres sector and had no need of immediate reinforcement. It did, however, receive a substantial draft of men from the North Staffordshire Regiment and Loyal North Lancashire Regiment in June 1917. Equating to 13.8

⁷⁴⁹ For further information on the methodology and sample, see appendix 1.

⁷⁵⁰ Unless specified, all statistics in this and following paragraphs regarding the Composition of drafts are drawn from the same dataset and sources used for table 4.1.

⁷⁵¹ TNA, WO95/1449, 1st Somerset Light Infantry war diary, July-November 1916.

⁷⁵² McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, p. 70.

⁷⁵³ TNA, WO95/1665, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers war diary, July 1916.

percent of its yearly drafting total, this transfer was likely ordered to bring the battalion up to strength in anticipation of upcoming operations that marked the beginning of the Third Battles of Ypres in July 1917.⁷⁵⁴

Transfers however, as a proportion of total drafts, fell from 17.4 to 10.7 percent in 1917 and 1918 respectively, whilst posting rose from 0.7 to 9.2. In part, this inverse was caused by the large number of battalions amalgamated, disbanded, and reduced throughout 1918. As Table 4.1 demonstrates, posting had never been utilised on a large scale before this, as it was rare for GHQ to withdraw manpower from battalions once they had arrived. Yet, in early 1918, the divisional structure of the BEF was reorganised from 13 to 10 battalions, which enabled the Adjutant General to shore up depleted battalions with surplus veterans. Even then, additional formations had to be amalgamated, disbanded, or reverted to cadres throughout 1918, as the German Spring Offensive in March had caused considerable losses and dislocation. Whilst both topics will be assessed in chapter five, it is significant that 73.3 percent of all soldiers posted occurred in 1918.

Though important, the drop in transfers can mostly be attributed to the sample of battalions used. Notably, the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers and 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion were transferred to the Italian Front in December 1917, after the collapse of the Italian Second Army at Caporetto. Although three of the five divisions sent to Italy had returned to the Western Front by February 1918, both battalions remained until the armistice. During this period, both held quite sections of the frontline and only conducted minor raids until the Vittorio Veneto Campaign in late October.⁷⁵⁵ This, combined with the Western Front's priority for reinforcements from 1916, ensured that drafts and transfers for the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers and 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion were minimal. The only large transfer received on the Italian Front was, in many ways, a localised affair.⁷⁵⁶ On 25th October, the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion received a draft designated for the 12th Durham Light Infantry,

⁷⁵⁴ TNA, WO95/2926, 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) war diary, July-December 1916 and January-July 1917; McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers*, pp. 211-219.

⁷⁵⁵ Beckett, Bowman and Connolly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 409-411; Rochat, Giorgio, 'The Italian Front, 1915-1918', in Horne, John (ed.), *Companion to World War I* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 89; Wilcox, Vanda, *Morale and the Italian Army during the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 2.

⁷⁵⁶ TNA, WO32/5091, Memorandum from Fowke to Robertson, 12th February 1917, and Letter from Army Council to Haig, 15th February 1917; TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office.

estimated at 38.6 percent of its yearly drafting total. The strength of the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion fluctuated between 500 to 600 between September and October and, with the ongoing difficulties with its regimental reserves, received a transfer of soldiers already allocated to the Italian Front.⁷⁵⁷ Thus, it is likely that transfers represented a greater proportion of drafts in 1918 than that stipulated in table 4.1, as most battalions on the Western Front would have endured a much larger turnover than that recorded by a minority of units stationed in Italy.

Despite this, 'A' branch was sympathetic to regimental integrity and, when able, transferred personnel from regiments or corps from the same regimental district or Home Command.⁷⁵⁸ For instance, 24 percent of transfers received by the 1st Somerset Light Infantry in 1916 came from the North Somerset Yeomanry and West Somerset Yeomanry, whilst 38.7 percent were drawn from regiments in the neighbouring counties of Cornwall, Devon, and Wiltshire. Nine first line Yeomanry Regiments, fully or in part, were amalgamated with regiments from the same county in late 1917, whilst the 1st Somerset Light Infantry received 32.8 percent of its transfers in 1918 from regiments in the newly created South-West recruitment region.⁷⁵⁹

Though subject to military necessity, the transfer of Scottish, Welsh and Irish recruits followed strict regulations. In September 1916, the Army Council faced the bleak prospect of rebuilding the 16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions, which had taken significant casualties during the Somme Campaign. As mentioned in chapter two, recruitment had plummeted across Ireland and there were insufficient Irish recruits to replace the colossal deficit in Irish infantry battalions, which were 17,194 below establishment. The Adjutant General in the UK, Lieutenant-General Sir Nevil Macready, proposed several solutions to the Army Council. This included the introduction of conscription to Ireland, the amalgamation of both divisions and the use of English drafts as reinforcements. Though the Army Council wished to amalgamate these formations, they understood this had a political dimension that required the approval

⁷⁵⁷ TNA, WO95/4251, 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion war diary, October 1918.

⁷⁵⁸ TNA, WO95/2439, Memorandum from Graham to Army, Corps and Divisional headquarters, 30th March 1917.

⁷⁵⁹ 1917 (Cd. 8833) *National service instruction. N.S.I. No. 2 of 1917. Constitution and organisation of regions, regional headquarters and recruiting areas, and transfer of recruiting to civil control under the Minister of National Service*; Hay, George Murray, 'The British Yeomanry Cavalry, 1794-1920' (University of Kent PhD Thesis, 2011), pp. 274-278.

of the War Cabinet. Though a seemingly sensible option within the short term, neither Sir Edward Carson or John Redmond, leaders of the Irish Unionists and Irish Parliamentary Party respectively, were willing to amalgamate these divisions together or accept a political compromise. Both wished to maintain their 'private armies' on the Western Front, which they thought were vital to their political position and prestige. Carson went as far to claim that, if amalgamation was inevitable, he would prefer the 36th (Ulster) Division to merge with the 51st (Highland) Division. Therefore, the Army Council, with few options available to it, decreed all Irish reinforcements would be sent to regular Irish units, whilst English recruits would be used to rebuild service battalions of Irish regiments. Whilst it is debatable how far this procedure enabled Irish units to retain their Irish identities, it did establish a precedence for other nationalities.⁷⁶⁰ Although the 38th (Welsh) Division was discussed by the Army Council at the same time, nothing was enacted until January 1917, when 'A' branch received War Office approval to use Englishman to reinforce understrength Scottish and Welsh regiments. Repeated again in March 1918, it stated no Scottish, Welsh, or Irish recruits were to be transferred to regiments of a different nationality.⁷⁶¹

This was sensible and, for the most part, it was enforced by 'A' branch. Based on the same methodology and sample as before, table 4.2 shows recruits or convalescents, earmarked for the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers at IBDs, that were redirected or transferred elsewhere between 1914 and 1918. By extension, table 4.3 demonstrates the destination of soldiers posted and transferred out of the battalion whilst on active service. Collectively, both tables show that these practices were limited and, from 1917, soldiers mostly went onto other Welsh regiments or regiments and corps without national identities. In 1917 and 1918, 83.9 percent of soldiers dispatched or transferred from IBDs went onto the South Wales Borderers and Welsh Regiment, with only three soldiers sent to English and Irish Regiments. Even then,

⁷⁶⁰ TNA, WO33/881, 188th and 190th Army Council Meeting, 27th September and 19th October 1916; TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General's war diary, 26th October 1916 and 27th January 1917; Bowman, Timothy, *The Irish Regiments in the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 142-143; Bowman, Timothy, Butler, William and Wheatley, Michael, *The Disparity of Sacrifice: Irish Recruitment to the British Armed Forces, 1914-1918* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020); Perry, Nicholas, 'Nationality in the Irish Infantry Regiments in the First World War', *War and Society*, 12:1 (1994), pp. 65-95.

⁷⁶¹ TNA, WO33/881, 188th Army Council Meeting, 27th September 1916; TNA, WO95/2439, Memorandum from Graham to Havre, Rouen, Étapes and Calais bases, 30th March 1918.

Table 4.2: Recruits or convalescents, earmarked for the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers at the IBD, diverted or transferred elsewhere, 1914-1918.⁷⁶²

	Cheshire Regiment	Royal Welsh Fusiliers	South Wales Borderers	West Lancashire Regiment	Royal Irish Fusiliers	Royal Irish Rifles	Dragoons	Royal Engineers	GHQ	Unknown	Total
1914											0
1915											0
1916	34	9	15							1	59
1917			25	1	1	1	1	1			30
1918									1		1
Total	34	9	40	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	90

* Dragoon regiment unspecified.

Table 4.3: Soldiers posted or transferred elsewhere whilst on active service with the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers, 1914-1918.⁷⁶³

	Royal Welsh Fusiliers	South Wales Borderers	Dragoons	Royal Engineers	Machine Gun Corps	ASC	Army Ordnance Corps	Cyclist Corps	Army Headquarters**	Total
1914										0
1915				10		1		1	1	13
1916		1			12		1			14
1917			3	2					1	6
1918	1				3					4
Total	1	1	3	12	15	1	1	1	2	37

*Dragoon regiment unspecified. **Army headquarters unspecified.

⁷⁶² TRWFM, 276, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers casualty books, Vol. I and II, 1914-1918.⁷⁶³ Ibid.

privates James Agnew and Frederick Berry were both born in, and likely residents of, Ballymacarrett, Belfast, and were therefore transferred onto their local regiment, the Royal Irish Rifles.⁷⁶⁴ In relation to those posted or transferred on active service, 73 percent had been transferred to the Royal Engineers and MGC, representing the expansion of both regiments in 1915 and 1916, respectively. Although this demonstrates 'A' branch's commitment to maintaining the national identity of units, there were instances of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish recruits being transferred to regiments of the wrong nationality. For instance, it seems that men combed out of rearward services were sent to any regiment, regardless of their nationality. Both privates Agnew and Berry had started in the ASC and, for unknown reasons, were transferred to the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. By extension, the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion had received a large draft from the ASC in October and December 1917, which included several Scots.⁷⁶⁵ Nevertheless, it is clear that 'A' branch attempted to draft Scots, Welsh, and Irishman to regiments of the same nationality with some success.

As these examples suggest, a proportion of transfers were formed of soldiers combed out of rearward services. Whilst a trickle of personnel had always been transferred to frontline units from a variety of sources, including the Royal Engineers, Military Field Police and, from February 1917, the Labour Corps, the War Office had applied pressure onto GHQ to limit the number of fit soldiers employed behind the frontline since early 1915. Despite resistance from the IGC and, at times, GHQ, regarding the loss of skilled and unskilled personnel, the War Office ordered Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Lawson to investigate the

⁷⁶⁴ Find My Past (FMP), *Soldiers Died in Great War*, entries for privates James Agnew, <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBM%2FWWISD%2F0564176> [last accessed 14/12/2022] and Frederick Berry, <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/transcript?id=GBM%2FWWISD%2F0558750> [last accessed 14/12/2022]; TRWFM, 276, entries for Private James Agnew and Frederick Berry, Royal Welsh Fusiliers casualty books, Vol. II, pp. 9 and 44.

⁷⁶⁵ BA, TA/6/13, entries for Archibald Anderson, William Christie, Alexander Dearness, Alexander Ferguson and Charles Gracie, 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion casualty books, Vol. III, pp. 2, 36, 50, 76, 97 and 93; TNA, WO363, Service files of Archibald Anderson, <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=GBM%2FWO363-4%2F007291411%2F00826&parentid=GBM%2FWO363-4%2F7291411%2F54%2F826> [last accessed 14/12/2022], William Christie, <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=GBM%2FWO363-4%2F007291938%2F00112&parentid=GBM%2FWO363-4%2F7291938%2F6%2F112> [last accessed 14/12/2022], Alexander Dearness, <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=GBM%2FWO363-4%2F007297027%2F00804&parentid=GBM%2FWO363-4%2F7297027%2F41%2F804> [last accessed 14/12/2022], Alexander Ferguson, <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=GBM%2FWO363-4%2F007280505%2F00012&parentid=GBM%2FWO363-4%2F7280505%2F1%2F12> [last accessed 14/12/2022] and Charles Gracie, <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=GBM%2FWO363-4%2F007391471%2F00171&parentid=GBM%2FWO363-4%2F7391471%2F9%2F171> [last accessed 14/12/2022].

use of manpower across the BEF in December 1916.⁷⁶⁶ In his two reports, submitted in January and February 1917, Lawson claimed 38,100 men on the Lines of Communication, as well as 53,000 to 100,000 soldiers in divisional, corps and army employment, could be gained through reorganisation and substitutions. Though Haig resisted the wholesale changes suggested by Lawson, including the overall number of personnel employed on the Lines of Communication, he did agree to the substitution of unfit men, woman and colonial labourers for fit soldiers. As will be discussed in chapter five, the adaption of medical categorisation and examinations, as well as the introduction of female and colonial labour, enabled rearward services to become more economical.⁷⁶⁷

Although skilled soldiers could only be replaced once others had been trained, it did lead to an influx of soldiers from rearward services, especially once manpower became scarce during the Third Battle of Ypres. In particular, the ASC were targeted. 3,100 men were earmarked by 'A' branch for substitution by 23rd August 1917, whilst Fifth Army had combed out an additional 1,085 men in September. Many roles, including drivers in motor transport companies, could be replaced with relative speed by soldiers of lower medical category and woman from the WAAC, which was created in early 1917.⁷⁶⁸ Overall, an estimated 80,000 men were combed out and a proportion sent to understrength infantry regiments, including the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion. In October and December 1917, they received a contingent of soldiers from the ASC motor transport section, which equated to 23.6 percent of all drafts that year. This is not surprising when considering the battalion's manpower problems and it seems 'A' branch prioritised regiments that were perpetually understrength to receive men combed out from other arms or corps.⁷⁶⁹

⁷⁶⁶ TNA, WO32/5091, Letter from Army Council to GHQ, 28th November 1916; TNA, WO95/3958-3970, IGC war diary, July 1915 - August 1916; Brown, *British Logistics*, pp. 84-85, 87 and 127-133.

⁷⁶⁷ TNA, WO32/5091, Letter from Haig to War Office, 27th April 1917; TNA, WO32/5093, Correspondence between Haig and GHQ regarding Lawson report, 1917; WO106/362, 'The number and physical categories of men employed out of the fighting area in France' by Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Lawson, 16th January 1917; TNA, WO106/363, 'The number and physical categories of men employed out of the fighting area in France (in Continuation of Report dated January 16th. 1917) and on economy of manpower in the fighting areas in France' by Lawson, 8th February 1917; Brown, *British Logistics*, pp. 165-167; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 162-164.

⁷⁶⁸ TNA, WO32/5093, Correspondence between Haig and GHQ regarding Lawson Report, 1917; TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary and conference summary, 21st August - 1st September 1917; TNA, WO95/526, Fifth Army AQMG war diary, 30th September 1917; TNA, WO106/362, 'Men employed out of the fighting area in France' by Lawson, 16th January 1917; TNA, WO106/363, 'Economy of man power in the fighting areas in France' by Lawson, 8th February 1917; Noakes, Lucy, *Women in the British Army: War and the Gentle Sex, 1907-1948* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 61-81.

⁷⁶⁹ TNA, WO32/5091, Memorandum from Macready to Lord Derby, 29th October 1917.

The GOC Fourth Army, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Rawlinson, noted on 8th August 1916 that reinforcements were being sent to the wrong regiments without any reason. One week later, he discussed the, 'great deal of... unnecessary mixing up of reinforcements for various units' with the Adjutant General.⁷⁷⁰ Though 'A' branch's response is untraceable, Macready retrospectively justified their actions in his memoir, claiming, 'in a war in which the whole nation is engaged *esprit de corps* must be for the army as a whole and for the nation, rather than for smaller units'.⁷⁷¹ Though correct, transfers were not always welcomed and their reception differed across individual battalions.⁷⁷² For instance, Captain Noël Drury, 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, strongly disliked the contingent of men transferred from the Norfolk Regiment in October 1915. Although they were well-educated, Drury found them 'uppish' and scorned the officers as lazy and non-instinctive soldiers. These feelings were mutual, with men from the Norfolk Regiment vocalising their 'hard luck' at being sent to an Irish Regiment.⁷⁷³

Others, however, integrated well and developed strong regimental loyalties. For example, Private Alexander Dearness enlisted into the ASC in early 1916 and was transferred to the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion in October 1917. He developed a strong loyalty to the regiment whilst serving with it in Italy and, in 1921, refused to accept his British war and victory medals when they were issued under his ASC service number. The 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion was, 'the only Regiment I served overseas with and I must still uphold its traditions. How could I do that with Army Service Corps decorations?'.⁷⁷⁴ Whilst it is unclear how the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion itself reacted to Dearness and others, it is probable that the high number of drafts absorbed from various regiments and parts of the UK had led its members to become more accommodating to men outside Buckinghamshire.⁷⁷⁵ This supports James E. Kitchen's argument regarding the emergence of a broader regimental

⁷⁷⁰ TNA, WO95/182, First Army AQMG war diary, 14th July 1916; TNA, WO95/446, Fourth Army AQMG war diary, 8th and 14th August 1916; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 123-124.

⁷⁷¹ Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, p. 257.

⁷⁷² Bowman, *Irish Regiments*, pp. 126-127 and 142-144.

⁷⁷³ Grayson, *Diary of Noël Drury*, pp. 9, 6-97, 103 and 150-151.

⁷⁷⁴ BA, TA/6/13, Entry for Private Alexander Dearness, 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion casualty book, Vol. III, p. 50; TNA, WO363, Private Alexander Dearness' service file, <https://search.findmypast.co.uk/record?id=GBM%2FWO363-4%2F007297027%2F00804&parentid=GBM%2FWO363-4%2F7297027%2F41%2F804> [last seen 14/12/2022].

⁷⁷⁵ For further information on the social profile of reinforcements, see chapter two.

identity based on an inclusive ethos. Based upon an analysis of the 54th (East Anglian) Division in Palestine and the Sinai, he argues that the erosion of regimental identity, based on its local character, in 1917, was replaced with a broader identity based upon traditions and common experience. Transfers could therefore integrate into regiments and develop a strong loyalty to it, despite their disruptive nature.⁷⁷⁶

Altogether, these changes streamlined reinforcement procedure and increased the speed drafts were received and organised by IBDs. Once drafts were arranged by 3rd Echelon however, they had to be transferred to the frontline via transportation on the Lines of Communication. There were no precise calculations for the time this process took but, during the Second Battle of Ypres, V Corps received its first draft on 25th April, roughly 48 hours after the German assault began.⁷⁷⁷ Though this process may have been slower during periods of inactivity, 48 hours should be considered a loose estimate for the time it took reinforcements to reach the frontline during active operations. Overall, this was relatively quick considering the administrative and organisation work involved in creating and transporting a draft from the base. Yet, a delay of this length could undermine the tempo and efficiency of operations, as, 'understrength battalions suffered in trying to take their objectives. Full strength units, their firepower and manoeuvrability maximized, simply did better on the battlefield'.⁷⁷⁸

It is, however, debatable whether GHQ understood the impact of this delay and how it affected operations. Richard Holt claims GHQ recognised this and attempted to reduce the time it took for reinforcements to reach the frontline by creating entrenching battalions. 10 British and four Canadian entrenching battalions were created in July 1915 and July 1916 respectively, and were established within the rear of armies, under divisional or corps authority. They were an 'advance depot' under the control of 3rd Echelon and, when drafts were requested, entrenching battalions would forward them onto the appropriate unit and then receive additional recruits from the IBDs. Entrenching battalions were also responsible for training recruits and providing work parties for labour. Although Hine claims that the primary purpose of entrenching battalions was to provide reinforcements with training that replicated 'frontline conditions', this seems unlikely. As will be discussed in chapter six, little

⁷⁷⁶ Kitchen, James E., *The British Imperial Army in the Middle East: Morale and Military Identity in the Sinai and Palestine Campaigns, 1916-1918* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 135-138.

⁷⁷⁷ TNA, WO95/731, V Corps AQMG war diary, 25th April 1915.

⁷⁷⁸ Granatstein, J. L., 'Foreword' in Dennis, *Reluctant Warriors*, pp. XI-XII.

training was provided to reinforcements at entrenching battalions and, due to their position at the rear, it did not provide a replica of frontline conditions.⁷⁷⁹

The premise of entrenching battalions was logical for several reasons. They were advance staging areas stationed across the Lines of Communication and, therefore, could supply reinforcements to the frontline faster than IBDs. Furthermore, it could free up additional space for supplies or reinforcements at British bases and help diversify the supply of reinforcements on the Western Front.⁷⁸⁰ Yet, entrenching battalions failed to speed up the delivery of reinforcements as their primary purpose was to offset the growing labour crisis in the BEF. Two weeks before their creation, the IGC had reported the severe labour shortage on the Lines of Communication. Whilst the use of pioneer battalions provided a temporary solution, this was a poor use of soldiers trained to deliver, “organized and intelligent labour” for engineering operations’ near the frontline. Therefore, the IGC and Adjutant General likely saw reinforcements as a source of labour that could be immediately used, especially as they were already undertaking routine fatigues at British bases.⁷⁸¹

Overall, this reduced the speed reinforcements could be forwarded, as the day-to-day routine of British and Canadian entrenching battalions did not favour prompt action. They were not concentrated in one location but divided into numerous work parties to perform labour across the surrounding area. For example, the 4th Canadian Entrenching Battalion provided eight different work parties on 13th January 1917, ranging in size from 25 to 100 men.⁷⁸² If reinforcements were requested by 3rd Echelon, it would take time to locate, recall and prepare reinforcements for departure. When the 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers was split up for road maintenance near Salonika, Captain Noël Drury did not, ‘like this scattering about of the Battalion over miles of country. It would be the very devil to collect them if we had to push off into the line in a hurry.’⁷⁸³

⁷⁷⁹ LAC, RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 5009, file 716-719, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Canadian Entrenching Battalions war diaries, July 1916 – September 1917; TNA, WO95/45, 3rd Echelon war diary, 29th July 1915; TNA, WO95/280, Second Army AQMG war diary, 20th July 1915; Hine, *Refilling Haig’s Armies*, p. 77; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 173 and 242.

⁷⁸⁰ Brown, *British Logistics*, pp. 109-134.

⁷⁸¹ TNA, WO95/43, 3rd Echelon war diary, 29th July 1915; TNA, WO95/3958, IGC war diary, 14th and 20th July 1915; Mitchinson, K. W., *Pioneer Battalions in the Great War: Organized and Intelligent Labour* (London: Leo Cooper, 1997), p. 3.

⁷⁸² LAC, RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 5009, file 716, 4th Canadian Entrenching Battalion war diary, 13th January 1917.

⁷⁸³ Grayson, *Diary of Noël Drury*, p. 126.

Reinforcements did have less distance to travel on the Lines of Communication. Yet, 'A' branch failed to establish a clear relationship between entrenching battalions and formations, which delayed the reinforcement process. For example, the 6th Entrenching Battalion was created in July 1915 and initially composed of reinforcements from the 3rd and 5th IBDs. Stationed near Albert between July 1915 and March 1916, it was able to forge a close relationship with the 5th Division, which had been posted to the same area in August 1915. The 3rd Division, however, was stationed south of Poperinge in Belgium, over 62 miles away. Whilst Albert was closer to Poperinge than Rouen, the decision was arbitrary, as the 2nd, 8th and 10th Entrenching Battalions served nearby to 3rd Division as part of Second Army.⁷⁸⁴

This practice continued throughout 1916 and, in January, the 6th Entrenching Battalion received drafts for the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment), 1st East Yorkshire Regiment and 1/5th South Lancashire Regiment. Yet, the 1st East Yorkshire Regiment was roughly 55 miles away at Armentières, whilst the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) and 1/5th South Lancashire Regiment had been withdrawn to reconstitute the 55th (West Lancashire) Division at Hallencourt, approximately 31 miles west. Even when the latter deployed in Arras the following month, which brought it into close contact with the 6th Entrenching battalion, its drafts were delayed. The 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) had to wait nearly two weeks for its draft, even though it was short of its establishment by over 300.⁷⁸⁵ Some units were even less fortunate and one draft, sent to the 1st Entrenching battalion in July 1915, did not arrive at the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion until January 1916.⁷⁸⁶

The CEF were unaffected by these problems as it created and posted an entrenching battalion to each division. The 1st Canadian Entrenching Battalion supported the 1st Canadian Division in the field and, of the 6,066 reinforcements dispatched between August 1916 and May 1917, only 6 were transferred.⁷⁸⁷ They retained a continuous, physical link with their parent division and followed them to any part of the Western Front. Therefore, when the 1st Canadian Division was transferred to Reserve Army (later Fifth Army) to take over the

⁷⁸⁴ TNA, WO95/280, Second Army AQMG war diary, 26th July and 8th-12th August 1915; TNA, WO95/1383, 3rd Division AQMG war diary, July-December 1915; TNA, WO95/1517, 5th Division AQMG war diary, 5th August 1915.

⁷⁸⁵ TNA, WO95/947, 6th Entrenching Battalion war diary, 10th-21st January 1916; TNA, WO95/2135, 21st Division AQMG war diary, January 1916; TNA, WO 95/2899, 55th (West Lancashire) war diary, January-February 1916; TNA, WO95/2926, 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) war diary, 8th February 1916.

⁷⁸⁶ BA, TA-6-11, 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion casualty book, Vol. I.

⁷⁸⁷ LAC, RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 5009, file 716, 1st Canadian Entrenching Battalion, August 1916 – May 1917.

frontline at Pozieres Ridge in September 1916, the 1st Canadian Entrenching Battalion relocated to Senlis-le-Sac, roughly 7 miles away.⁷⁸⁸ This divergence of practice is partly due to the comparative size of the BEF and CEF. The BEF had 11 entrenching battalions to support 15 corps by June 1916 which, inevitably, caused problems in the distribution and supply of reinforcements. Whilst additional entrenching battalions would have balanced this out, the practice of moving divisions across the Western Front made this option unfeasible. By comparison, the size of the CEF was ideal, as entrenching battalions could be organised on a divisional basis. This ensured entrenching battalions remained within close proximity of their corresponding division, which expedited the reinforcement process.

Even then, 'A' branch regularly reduced entrenching battalions to cadres during active operations. For example, the 6th Entrenching Battalion fell to a strength of 11 officers and 180 other ranks by the end of December 1915. Although it continued to receive and dispatch reinforcements, most of 1916 was spent in a hand-to-mouth existence and, for the first six months of 1917, it was little more than a nucleus.⁷⁸⁹ Although influenced by the severity of active operations, the lack of reinforcements sent to entrenching battalions indicates they were not considered vital for the quick delivery of drafts. Whilst the size and organisation of the Canadian Corps enabled them to function, they were designed to pool available manpower for labour on the Lines of Communication during periods of inactivity.

Due to this, the Lines of Communication from IBDs remained the primary method of delivering reinforcements on the Western Front. Thus, the supply of reinforcements became reliant upon the capacity and reliability of the transportation system in France and Belgium. Whilst functioning throughout 1914 and 1915, the near collapse of it during the Somme campaign significantly affected the flow of reinforcements at a critical time. As Ian Malcolm Brown has argued, the expansion of the BEF from 1914 to 1916, especially artillery, had stretched the pre-existing, *ad hoc* transportation system to its limit. When the Battle of the Somme begun in July 1916, the demand for material, ammunition and manpower spiked. This,

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid, 1st-9th September and 15th-24th October 1916; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, pp. 165-166 and 187.

⁷⁸⁹ LAC, RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 5009, file 716, 1st Canadian Entrenching Battalion war diary, July 1916 - April 1917; TNA, WO95/947, 6th Entrenching Battalion war diary, 24th December 1915 and January 1916 - June 1917; TNA, WO95/905, 11th Entrenching Battalion war diary, September 1916 - April 1917; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 173.

combined with poor infrastructure in the Somme region, placed an immense pressure on the transportation system and led to the Lines of Communication breaking down.⁷⁹⁰

This, in turn, severely curtailed the delivery of reinforcements throughout the campaign. After corresponding with GHQ, Fourth Army noted on 16th July that only 2,000 reinforcements per day could be sent to their part of the Somme battlefield. Whilst the number of reinforcements did, at times, exceed this cap, such as 2,742 on 21st July and 4,860 on 20th September, the daily average each month never exceeded this. Whilst this could have been caused by a shortage of reinforcements, this is highly improbable when considering the recent changes to the organisation of the IBD system. As discussed, the transition from a divisional to a regimental organisation, as well as the power to transfer personnel, ensured reinforcements could be channelled into any battalion of any regiment. It seems unlikely therefore that the 10 and nine divisions that took part in assaults on 1st and 14th July respectively could only draw upon 200 to 225 reinforcements each per day.⁷⁹¹

This raises significant questions about the quasi-strategy of attrition adopted at the Somme and whether, considering these limitations, it could have been successful. Overall, the strategy adopted by Haig was ambiguous, as it kept switching between a battle of attrition and breakout. Whilst arguments that attrition could have been avoided by pursuing an 'Easterner' strategy have been firmly rejected, there remains an ongoing dispute within the broader historiography regarding Haig's primary objectives on the Somme. Historians continue to debate whether he attempted to break through German defences to restore mobility to the battlefield, or waged attritional war to wear down the German Army and relieve pressure on the French Army at Verdun.⁷⁹²

The strategy adopted by Haig was a combination of the two however, as he had failed to establish firm strategic objectives and, 'veered between seeing it as a wearing-out battle

⁷⁹⁰ Brown, *British Logistics*, pp. 109-134.

⁷⁹¹ TNA, WO95/441, Fourth Army AQMG war diary, 16th July – 31st November 1916.

⁷⁹² For a broader perspective on this debate, see; Greenhalgh, Elizabeth, 'Why the British were on the Somme in 1916', *War in History*, 6:2 (1999), pp. 147-173; Greenhalgh, Elizabeth, 'Flames over the Somme: A retort to William Philpott', *War in History*, 10:3 (2003), pp. 335-342; Harris, *Haig and the First World War*, pp. 211-240; Philpott, William, *Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice on the Somme* (London: Abacus, 2010); Philpott, William, 'Why the British were Really on the Somme: A Reply to Elizabeth Greenhalgh', *War in History*, 9:4 (2002), pp. 446-471; Sheffield, *The Chief*, pp. 170-198; Sheffield, Gary and Bourne, John (eds), *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters, 1914-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), pp.29-33.

and a decisive offensive'.⁷⁹³ Before and during the campaign, Haig was convinced a breakout was possible and, notoriously, changed Fourth Army's original plan of attack from a cautious, methodological advance to capture the first line of German defences, to a bold strike that aimed to break through the entire defence system in one rush. Though failing to breakout on 1st July, Haig, encouraged by overtly positive, if misleading, intelligence about the poor state of the German Army, continued to believe that a decisive victory was possible until at least October. Though several larger scale operations were subsequently launched to achieve this, including the Battles of Bazentin Ridge and Flers-courcelette in early July and September respectively, there were many smaller, attritional battles that took place before each offensive. Though some were deemed essential preliminary steps for bringing the army up to a satisfactory start line for these operations, others, including those that took place in August, lacked purpose beyond applying pressure onto the German Army and satisfying Britain's ally, France. Without any clear direction, heavy casualties were incurred and, as Alexander Watson argues, 'the Battle of the Somme became an attritional contest by default, not design.'⁷⁹⁴

Historians also agree that the operations planned by Haig and other commanders, such as Rawlinson, were outside the BEF's capability in the summer of 1916. Rawlinson had a stronger grasp over operational practices than Haig, as he advocated a version of what Paul Harris and Sanders Marble term the 'step-by-step' approach, which was a series of methodological, limited advances. Yet, he was overridden and influenced by Haig to adopt a more grandiose plan, which doubled the depth of the planned advance and aimed to achieve distant objectives, such as Bapaume. Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson argue that the BEF's inexperience undermined operations of this nature, as it lacked the tactical and technological expertise needed to neutralise enemy defences. This caused problems throughout the campaign and, alongside a breakdown in command, operational planning was usually rushed and inadequate, leading to 'penny packet' attacks with insufficient support.⁷⁹⁵

⁷⁹³ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 279.

⁷⁹⁴ Beach, Jim, *Haig's Intelligence: GHQ and the German Army* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 195-217; Connelly, Mark, *Steady the Buffs! A Regiment, A region, and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.94; Greenhalgh, Elizabeth, *Victory through Coalition: Britain and France during the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 68; Watson, Alexander, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 16.

⁷⁹⁵ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 284-300; Harris, Paul and Marble, Sanders, 'The 'Step-by-Step' Approach: British Military Thought and Operational Method on the

Though a substantial problem, the reinforcement system could not supply the drafts needed to sustain the operational tempo demanded by Haig's ambitious strategic goals. With Fourth Army receiving an average of 2,000 reinforcements per day, divisions could not break in and out of German defences before grinding to a halt under the weight of its own casualties. Even without the fragility of the transportation system, the two to three weeks it took for reinforcements to arrive on the frontline from England was simply too long to enable such operations to occur. Despite Gary Sheffield and John Bourne's claim that Haig had 'mastery of his army', including, 'the mechanics of 3rd echelon base depot at Rouen', he failed to recognise how the reinforcement system fundamentally shaped the operational capacity of the BEF.⁷⁹⁶

GHQ misunderstood this and attempted to maintain operational tempo by micro-managing its manpower assets across the Western Front. At times, GHQ attempted to do this by channelling reinforcements into certain divisions earmarked for future action. For example, Rawlinson asked the Adjutant General to prioritise reinforcements for the 7th and 21st Divisions on 7th July. Whilst both had suffered heavy casualties, losing an estimated 3,824 and 4,663 respectively during the first week of operations, Rawlinson had earmarked them for the upcoming assault on 14th July at Bazentin Ridge. GHQ complied and the 7th Division received reinforcements as late as 13th July, when a draft of 1,400 men arrived. Whilst directing reinforcements into certain divisions could sustain operations in the short term, it could only achieve this by starving other formations of drafts. For instance, the 34th Division had to exchange its 102nd and 103rd Brigades with the unscathed 111th and 112th Brigades of the 37th Division to remain in the line. Even then, the prioritisation of divisions had limitations, as the 21st Division was also forced to exchange its depleted 61st Brigade with the 37th Division's remaining brigade, the 110th, for the upcoming assault.⁷⁹⁷

Although operations could continue, the exchange of brigades destroyed the operational capacity of other formations. The 37th Division remained inactive for most of the Somme Campaign as it had to rebuild. Though retaining the 61st Brigade, both the 111th and

Western Front, 1915-1917', *War in History*, 15:1 (2008), pp. 23-31; Prior and Wilson, *Command on the Western Front*, pp. 144-258.

⁷⁹⁶ Sheffield and Bourne, *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters*, p. 29.

⁷⁹⁷ TNA, WO95/441, Fourth Army AQMG war diary, 7th-10th July 1916; TNA, WO95/684, III Corps AQMG war diary, 6th July 1916; Miles, Wilfred, *Military operations, France and Belgium 1916, Vol. II* (London: Macmillan, 1938), pp. 13, 17, 21, 62 and 72; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 120 and 122.

112th Brigades were once again exchanged for the 102nd and 103rd Brigades in late August, after the 34th Division had suffered nearly 3,000 casualties that month. Although the 34th Division was able to continue operations, the 37th Division had to be sacrificed and, as a result, saw no action until its minor role at the Battle of Ancre in November 1916. This practice was short-sighted and, overall, damaging to the operational capacity of the BEF.⁷⁹⁸

The primary method used to sustain operational tempo however was the repeated rotation of divisions and, to a much lesser extent, corps, in and out of the Somme Battlefront. On average, V, X, XIII and XIV corps, who were at the Somme for a minimum of two and a half months, received 19 different divisions each between July and November 1916, which represented nearly a third of all divisions in the BEF.⁷⁹⁹ Second Army alone rotated 17 divisions into Fourth and Fifth Army between 1st July and 18th November, with most undertaking multiple tours of duty. The 4th, 19th (Western) and 51st (Highland) Divisions undertook two tours in either Fourth and Fifth Army between July and October 1916, whilst the newly arrived 1st, 2nd and 4th Australian Divisions served three separate stints on the Somme.⁸⁰⁰ Though essential from a reinforcement perspective, as divisions needed time to rest and refit, this practice could not overcome the inherent slowness of the reinforcement system, as the exchange of divisions took several days to complete. All momentum would have been lost and this process unnecessarily exposed British and Dominion divisions to attrition. Although reinforcements were spread more broadly across the British line, it contributed to the breakdown of the transportation system. The sheer volume of formations being moved across the Western Front and Somme region would have taken up vital rail and road capacity that could not be spared.

The Canadian Corps, however, does not fit this pattern due to their organisational homogeneity. Unlike their British counterparts, Canadian divisions were not rotated into other formations, as the identity of the Canadian Corps had become a national symbol and was vital for retaining the confidence of the Canadian government.⁸⁰¹ Yet, as Andy Simpson

⁷⁹⁸ Becke, A. F., *Order of Battle of Divisions, Part 3B: New Army Divisions (30-41) and 63rd (R.N.) Division* (London: HMSO, 1939), pp. 74-76 and 78; Miles, *Military operations, France and Belgium 1916, Vol. II*, pp. 188, 503, 512 and 523.

⁷⁹⁹ Simpson, Andy, *Directing Operations: British Corps Command on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2006), p. 26.

⁸⁰⁰ TNA, WO95/280, Second Army AQMG war diary, 1st July – 18th November 1916.

⁸⁰¹ Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, pp. 114-115 and 379-381.

argues, divisions were easier to move and corps, especially with predesignated divisions, were relatively immobile due to the time it took to relieve such a large section of the frontline safely.⁸⁰² Therefore, the Canadian Corps was not transferred to the Somme until mid-September and, afterwards, remained on the frontline for nearly seven weeks.⁸⁰³ Whilst the corps structure offered excellent organisational and operational benefits, its static composition exposed Canadian divisions to a much longer period of attrition than their British counterparts under Haig's strategy. Without relief or rest, Canadian units were subjected to similar pressures experienced by the BEF in 1914, which precipitated a drafting crisis in November 1916. Though the inefficient Canadian reserve system in the UK contributed to this, the 24,029 casualties sustained, 90 percent of which were infantry, would have caused havoc in any reinforcement system.⁸⁰⁴ While GOC Fifth Army, Lieutenant-General Hubert Gough, was rightfully criticised by Haig's Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Sir Launcelot Edward Kiggell, for pushing the Canadian Corps too hard, the root cause was GHQ's desire to maintain an unrealistic tempo of operations.⁸⁰⁵

For Hine, this made the British, rather than the Canadian, corps structure more beneficial from a reinforcement perspective, as it enabled divisions to be rotated in and out of combat faster. Though she rightfully claims this flexibility gave divisions time to refill before returning to battle, she fails to acknowledge how this process undermined the internal cohesion and tactical performance of battalions.⁸⁰⁶ As mentioned, reinforcements were prioritised for certain divisions and, to ensure manpower went to active formations, GHQ purposefully starved divisions of reinforcements not earmarked for, or serving at, the Somme. Taking effect in mid-July, divisions on defensive fronts would only receive reinforcements to bring them up to a strength of 9,000.⁸⁰⁷ When earmarked for active operations, units were strengthened as much as possible before departure. Though sensible when considering the growing manpower crisis, the speed that divisions were rotated in and out of the Somme

⁸⁰² Simpson, *Directing Operations*, pp. 25-27.

⁸⁰³ The 4th Canadian Division landed in August 1916 and was not part of the Canadian Corps until November 1916. Although it was used separately, it served on the frontline for a similar amount of time.

⁸⁰⁴ Brown, Ian Malcolm, 'Not Glamorous, But Effective: The Canadian Corps and the Set-piece Attack, 1917-1918', *The Journal of Military History*, 58:3 (1994), pp. 421-444; Cook, Tim, *At the Sharp End*, p. 525; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, pp. 167-198.

⁸⁰⁵ Sheffield and Bourne, *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters*, p. 333; Stewart, *The Embattled General*, p. 152.

⁸⁰⁶ Hines, *Refilling Haig's Army*, pp. 22-23

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 120.

sector ensured they did not have the time required to absorb and integrate such a large number of reinforcements before an assault. For example, the 29th Division was transferred from Fourth to Second Army in late July, after suffering over 5,500 casualties in the first week of July. Between 27th July and 20th September, the 29th Division gradually received 3,191 reinforcements and brought each battalion up to a strength of 700 to 750. Yet, after the 29th Division had been earmarked for the Somme battlefield on 21st September, it received 1,493 men until 6th October, which equated to an average of 651 reinforcements per week. Whilst replenishing the 29th Division, battalions had little time to absorb and integrate these men before returning to the Somme. It received its last draft on the day of departure and, between 6th and 9th October, travelled to Fourth Army. Within four days of arrival, two of its brigades, the 86th and 87th, had already relieved elements of the 41st Division in the line, whilst the 88th Brigade had been attached to the 12th (Eastern) Division and took part in one of the small engagements that formed the Battle of Transloy Ridges.⁸⁰⁸

This process created instability and, without the time needed to absorb and integrate reinforcements, it could undermine the morale and internal cohesion of a battalion. In turn, this reduced its combat effectiveness and led to heavier casualties, as the unit lacked the determination and organisation needed to push forward on the battlefield. Haig, however, struggled to conceptualise this and the impact it had on the battlefield performance of frontline units.⁸⁰⁹ In his diary, Haig claimed the 49th (West Riding) Division had failed to hold onto recently captured parts of the German line at Ancre on 3rd September. Based upon the information provided by Gough, Haig blamed this failure upon the 1/6th and 1/8th West Yorkshire Regiment, which, 'did not really attack, and some men did not follow their officers. The total losses of this division are under a thousand!'. Whilst Haig suspected this was due to a lack of discipline, which he had recorded during a recent inspection of the division, he failed to consider prominent issues affecting it. For example, the 49th (West Riding) Division had been used piecemeal until this point, with its brigades used separately on 1st and 2nd July to support the 32nd and 36th (Ulster) Divisions between Thiepval and Ancre. This, and repeated

⁸⁰⁸ TNA, WO95/280 Second Army AQMG war diary, 27th July 1916; TNA, WO95/2286, 29th Division AQMG war diary, 8th July, 31st August and 6th-13th October 1916; Miles, *Military operations, France and Belgium 1916*, Vol. II, p. 441.

⁸⁰⁹ TNA, WO32/5091, Letter from Haig to War Office, 21st November 1916.

exposure to attrition through small scale actions, reduced the strength and organisation of the division until September, when they launched their first divisional assault.⁸¹⁰

Indeed, by focusing on the 1/6th West Yorkshire Regiment throughout this period, it is clear that the 49th (West Riding) Division's mediocre performance was affected by GHQ's strategy and reinforcement policy. The 1/6th West Yorkshire Regiment had not taken a leading part in any major engagement and, instead, had been used in several small scale actions to consolidate and expand the local 'Leipzig Salient', which had been captured by 32nd Division on 1st July. On 30th June, the battalion had a strength of 38 officers and 898 other ranks and was held in reserve to support the 32nd Division and 36th (Ulster) Division. Though not part of the initial assault and were subsequently used to hold parts of the frontline opposite Thiepval, the battalion lost 14 officers and 200 other ranks by 2nd July, equivalent to 37 and 22 percent of its officer and other rank strength, respectively. Losses included several senior and long-serving officers that had accompanied the battalion over from England in April 1915, including the CO and commander of 'D' company, Lieutenant-Colonel H. O. Wade and Captain J. L. Heston, respectively. By the end of the month, 22 officers, or 58 percent of its original pre-Somme strength, had become casualties, including the newly appointed CO, Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Scott, and his Second-in-Command, Captain E. W. Knowles. Combined with other losses in August, the battalion had suffered a substantial blow to its internal cohesion.⁸¹¹ Although some regiments, including the Buffs (East Kent Regiment), managed to mitigate these effects by cross posting regular officers and NCOs across its battalions, the 1/6th West Yorkshire Regiment received three captains, one lieutenant and nine Second Lieutenants that were unbeknown to the battalion.⁸¹² Although no record was kept of other rank casualties, the strength of the 1/6th West Yorkshire Regiment was 620 other ranks on 27th August, which equated to a 31 percent drop in total strength from June. Whilst useful, this figure underestimates total losses during the period, as reinforcements were, reportedly, rushed in

⁸¹⁰ TNA, WO95/2765, 49th (West Riding) Division war diary, July-September 1916; Quote from Haig's diary, 5th September 1916, in Sheffield and Bourne, *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters*, pp. 168-169.

⁸¹¹ TNA, WO95/2765, 49th (West Riding) Division war diary and memoranda, 1st July – 3rd September 1916; TNA, WO95/2792, 146th Brigade war diary, 1st July – 3rd September 1916; TNA, WO95/2794, 1/6th West Yorkshire Regiment war diary, 1st July – 28th August 1916; TNA, WO329/2948, West Yorkshire Regimental Medal Rolls, 1914-1915 Star; Magnus, Laurie, *West Riding Territorials in the Great War* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1920), pp. 141-143; Wryall, Everard, *The West Yorkshire Regiment in The War, 1914-1918, Vol. I*, (London: The Bodley Head, 1927), pp. 237-239.

⁸¹² TNA, WO95/2792, 146th Brigade war diary, 1st July – 31st August 1916; Connelly, *Steady the Buffs!*, pp. 20-21, 35, 73-74, 99.

from a multitude of regiments to partially offset their losses. Therefore, the battalion had endured a turbulent period of rapid turnover.⁸¹³

This does not automatically correlate to a drop in combat effectiveness, however. As Mark Connelly argues, the ability to integrate newcomers was vital and, 'the process [of training] served to iron out difficulties between longstanding members of the battalions and fresh drafts'.⁸¹⁴ Yet, the 1/6th West Yorkshire Regiment had little time to absorb reinforcements through training as most were received during their various stints at the Leipzig Salient. The battalion only had seven days of training between 1st July and 2nd September, with only four days dedicated to company training.⁸¹⁵ As Haig belatedly realised in November, 'these men [other ranks]... are strange to their units. They neither know their leaders nor do leaders know them.'⁸¹⁶ This undermined the tactical proficiency of units as well as the morale of reinforcements, who were rushed into understrength battalions at short notice. They were given little opportunity to prepare for battle and, without any close connections to veterans or other primary groups within the unit, were likely to experience 'feelings of inferiority'.⁸¹⁷

It is not surprising therefore that the 1/6th West Yorkshire Regiment's attack on 3rd September was unsuccessful. Alongside other problems, such as inconsistent artillery and flanking support, the attack fell apart after the first wave entered the enemy frontline, as most officers and NCOs were wounded during the initial advance across no man's land. This seemed to have destroyed whatever cohesion existed within the battalion as, within two hours of the assault beginning, all companies had withdrawn back to their own trenches. Despite attempts to regroup, no further attacks could be launched as the battalion was reported as 'utterly disorganised'.⁸¹⁸ Thus, Haig's comments reveal a lack of understanding

⁸¹³ TNA, WO95/2765, 49th (West Riding) Division war diary, 1st July – 31st August 1916; TNA, WO95/2792, 146th Brigade war diary, 27th August 1916; Wryall, *The West Yorkshire Regiment*, p. 284.

⁸¹⁴ Connelly, *Steady the Buffs!*, p. 99.

⁸¹⁵ TNA, WO95/2794, 1/6th West Yorkshire Regiment war diary, 1st July – 3rd September 1916.

⁸¹⁶ TNA, WO32/5091, Letter from Haig to War Office, 21st November 1916.

⁸¹⁷ For further details on training, see chapter six. The impact on morale was drawn from the experience of reinforcements in the 2nd New Zealand Division during the Second World War, who underwent a similar process in 1944. See; Fennell, Jonathan, *Fighting the People's War: The British and Commonwealth Armies and the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 415-417.

⁸¹⁸ TNA, WO95/2765, 49th (West Riding) Division war diary and weekly reports on operations, September 1916; Magnus, *West Riding Territorials in the Great War*, pp. 144-146.

about how his operational demands and reinforcement procedures combined to damage his own unit's ability to function on the battlefield.

Overall, this demonstrates that the reinforcement system, just like the transportation system, could not sustain the operational tempo needed for a breakout in 1916. It supports Marble and Harris' argument that smaller 'step-by-step' operations could have achieved better results in a shorter period. As advocated by key military figures, such as the CIGS, General Sir William Robertson, it was a series of short, but deliberate advances that inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy by maximising the firepower of artillery. By focusing upon a smaller area, artillery could concentrate its firepower, which neutralised German defences and enabled the infantry to push forward. Once a position had been consolidated, with supply routes established and artillery brought up, another operation could be prepared and launched.⁸¹⁹ During this period, fresh divisions could be brought in, giving depleted divisions the time needed to accept and integrate reinforcements. Overall, units would avoid unnecessary exposure to attrition and, when in the line, operate at a higher efficiency. Although historians such as Bourne, Sheffield and William Philpott somewhat reject these claims, claiming that all operations, no matter their scale, would incur significant casualties, 'step-by-step' operations had a clear link to the strategy of attrition and could be supported by the logistic and reinforcement systems.⁸²⁰

Despite these problems, Initial prospects for operations in 1917 appeared positive for two reasons. Firstly, the *ad hoc* transportation system had been reorganised from late 1916 under the astute leadership of Sir Eric Geddes, a civilian expert who had been Deputy General Manager of the North Eastern Railway between 1911 and 1915. The position of IGC was abolished and all transportation systems, as well as their maintenance, were centralised under the role of Director-General of Transport. This led to substantial improvements, as railways were reorganised, greatly expanded, and brought under British control, whilst the methods of delivery were diversified through the construction of light railway and other infrastructure. As a result, there were no recorded difficulties in moving reinforcements along the Lines of Communication throughout 1917, which removed one of the most substantial

⁸¹⁹ Marble and Harris, 'The 'Step-by-Step' Approach', pp. 19-35.

⁸²⁰ Philpott, *Bloody Victory*, pp. 8 and 625-629; Sheffield and Bourne, *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters*, p. 29.

challenges faced by GHQ.⁸²¹ Secondly, Haig began to consider how the reinforcement system shaped the tactical capacity and combat effectiveness of the BEF. In late 1916, he told the War Office that, 'it is not possible for units to absorb the large number of new drafts during active operations and still retain the same fighting efficiency.' This process, he argued, led to heavier casualties, as 'our divisions... enter the battle with undigested reinforcements, i.e., with insufficient time to incorporate and absorb the men who have been hurried into their battalions at the last moment.'⁸²²

Though positive, inconsistencies emerged within Haig's thinking, as he drew the wrong conclusions from the evidence. Rather than consider operational practices that were feasible under the reinforcement system, including the time needed for divisions to rebuild and absorb drafts through training, Haig requested a staggering 1.5 million reinforcements in 1917. Each unit would be maintained at 100 men above establishment before combat, so reinforcements could be trained alongside their battalion. They, alongside the small nucleus of leaders and specialists from each battalion, would then be withdrawn prior to combat, as demanded in *SS135, Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action*. This would create a small pool of trained reinforcements that could mitigate the immediate influx of reinforcements from the base, which were to bring divisions above establishment as soon as they left the frontline. Though Haig rightfully claimed this would sustain morale, ensure greater cohesion and enable formations to return to the frontline quicker, these were unrealistic manpower demands that even the Army Council criticised. Noting Haig's request for an additional 150,000 men in the last six months for the heavy and siege artillery, Royal Flying Corps, and Heavy Branch MGC, they advised him that such demands were not limitless. Choosing to ignore this warning, Haig complained again about the insufficient number of reinforcements he had received in December 1916.⁸²³

As Haig refused to accept the limitations placed upon strategy and operations by the inherent slowness of the reinforcement system, problems at the Somme were repeated throughout the campaigns of 1917. Formations were repeatedly rotated into combat and

⁸²¹ Beckett, Bowman and Connolly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 310-311; Brown, *British Logistics*, pp. 139-151; Sheffield and Bourne, *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters*, p. 311.

⁸²² TNA, WO32/5091, Letter from Haig to War Office, 21st November 1916.

⁸²³ Ibid, Letters between Haig and War Office, 13th-24th November 1916 and 12th and 21st December 1916; *SS135, Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action* (London: HMSO, 1916), pp. 78-79.

given insufficient time to rebuild between engagements, which reduced their combat effectiveness and led to heavier casualties. For instance, the 34th Division was one of 30 divisions rotated into the Battle of Arras during April and May 1917 and served twice in short succession.⁸²⁴ Though designed as a limited 'step-by-step' operation to support the larger French offensive at Chemin des Dames, the success of First and Third Armies on 9th April led to Haig demanding GOC Third Army, Lieutenant-General Sir Edmund Allenby, to maintain a high tempo of operations. The succession of attacks that followed degenerated into, 'a continuous chain of ill-considered, ill-prepared assaults' that the reinforcement system could not keep pace with.⁸²⁵

The 34th Division served on the frontline from 9th to 14th April and lost 132 officers and 2,598 other ranks, estimated at 31 percent of its trench strength. Those that survived were also at the limits of endurance, with the division's Assistant Director of Medical Services (ADMS), Colonel E. W. Bless, issuing a warning that troops were, 'suffering from exposure, dangerously exhausted, and unfit for any further action.'⁸²⁶ The division, however, was only given ten days of rest before it returned to the frontline, where it attempted to reorganise and absorb the 1,481 reinforcements it received. The division returned to the line on 24th April and, four days later, took part in the unsuccessful Battle of Arleux. Summarising the reasons for failure, GOC 34th Division, Major-General C. L. Nicholson, stated his division needed more time to recuperate and train. Battalions had a trench strength of 520 and the majority were inexperienced drafts who had not seen action. They lacked individual and specialist training and, combined with the recent, 'losses in good Officers, N.C.Os and men in the first phase [9th-14th April], the fighting value of the division... could not be said to be anything approaching what it was on 9th April.' For the division to 'pull its weight', especially during complex operations that involve night-time manoeuvres, Nicholson believed ample preparation and training was an absolute necessity.⁸²⁷

Similar problems occurred throughout the Third Battle of Ypres, which had ambitious aims to breakout towards the Belgian coast. The offensive organised by Fifth Army achieved

⁸²⁴ Simpson, *Directing Operations*, p. 62.

⁸²⁵ Beckett, Bowman and Connolly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 314-321.

⁸²⁶ TNA, WO95/2443, 34th Division ADMS war diary, April 1917; Falls, C. B, *Military operations, France and Belgium 1917, Vol. I* (London: HMSO, 1940), p. 293.

⁸²⁷ TNA, WO95/2433, 34th Division war diary, April 1917.

considerable success on 31st July, seizing key territory from the German Army for equal losses, estimated at 27,000 apiece. GOC Fifth Army, Lieutenant-General Hubert Gough, however, ordered subsequent attacks to take place on 2nd and 4th August, which was an insufficient amount of time to replenish divisions or arrange adequate artillery support. Although Haig paused major operations until 10th August, divisions had to be rotated into reserve, refilled, and returned in quick succession to meet the deadline.⁸²⁸ Indeed, the 15th (Scottish) Division was rotated into reserve on 4th August 1917 after suffering 5,221 casualties and was sent back to the line on 17th August, as it had been earmarked for upcoming operations. During this period, it had six days to absorb and integrate the 51 officer and 3,696 other rank reinforcements it received, which was made even more difficult by their sporadic arrival.⁸²⁹ Most officer reinforcements reached their battalions just before departure and many were deemed poorly trained, which left divisional staff little time to rectify the mistakes recorded during a practice assault on 19th August. This caused frustration within the 15th (Scottish) Division, with 'A' staff complaining that casualty estimates had not been acted upon promptly by 3rd Echelon. If available, reinforcements, 'should be sent as early as possible to give divisions a chance of reorganising and some training before going into the line again.' GOC 15th (Scottish) Division, Major-General H. F. Thuillier, reported to XIX Corps the absolute importance of rest and training for depleted divisions. Formations, he argued, 'which have suffered heavy casualties in previous fighting should not be called upon to make a fresh attack until they have been able to absorb the drafts and carry out a short period of training. At least one month's training is required... [or] the division should go into a quiet part of the line for at least one month.'⁸³⁰

This practice had exhausted manpower reserves by early August 1917 and, as Haig noted, 'divisions having been once in the battle cannot be made up again but must go forward a second time *below* war establishment [original emphasis].'⁸³¹ This situation may have led Haig to consider the problem again in late August, as he ordered a three week operational

⁸²⁸ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 328-332; Harris, *Haig and the First World War*, pp. 355-370; Prior, Robin and Wilson, Trevor, *Passchendaele: The Untold Story* (London: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 45-53 and 67-110.

⁸²⁹ TNA, WO95/1915, 15th (Scottish) Division war diary and narrative of operations, August 1917.

⁸³⁰ TNA, WO95/1915, 15th (Scottish) Division war diary, operational and 'A and Q' reports, August 1917; TNA, WO95/1918, 15th (Scottish) Division AQMG war diary, August 1917.

⁸³¹ Sheffield and Bourne, *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters*, pp. 310-311.

pause and transitioned the offensive from GOC Fifth Army, Gough, to GOC Second Army, Lieutenant-General Sir Herbert Plumer. The decision to revert control of the offensive to Second Army suggested the acceptance of a slower operational tempo as, unlike Gough's string of ill-prepared and poorly coordinated attacks since 10th August, Plumer advocated a series of limited 'step-by-step' operations.⁸³² This was important, as artillery could be massed before each assault and divisions could be rotated at a slower pace to ensure they had adequate time to rebuild. Indeed, Haig began to consider the relief, rest and training of divisions to be of great importance and, in his diary, stated divisions must be withdrawn after a failed attack, so it can train before performing another assault.⁸³³

Nevertheless, Haig became convinced that the German army was near collapse in late September. Influenced by Plumer's successes at the Battles of Menin Road, Polygon Wood Broodseinde on 20th and 26th September and 4th October respectively, as well as the misleading intelligence reports regarding the deteriorating state of German morale and reserves, he ordered Passchendaele Ridge to be cleared with breakout operations directed towards Roulers. Even after the Battle of Poelcapelle and First Battle of Passchendaele, fought on 9th and 12th October respectively, failed to make any progress due to abysmal weather and ineffective artillery support, Haig persisted and discounted the effects this had on his own forces.⁸³⁴ He wilfully ignored his own advice about the need to rest and train divisions, as he and GOC XIV Corps, Lord Cavan, agreed on 1st October that long delays between attacks were no longer necessary as divisions 'understood' how to make an attack.⁸³⁵ Unsurprisingly, this ignored the difficulties faced by frontline formations, such as 7th Division, which held the frontline in horrific conditions from 1st to 11th and 24th to 29th October. During their first period of service, they held against a series of German counterattacks from 1st to 3rd October and participated in operations on both 4th and 9th that month. Though suffering 177 officer and 3,818 other ranks casualties, brigades only had six to eight days of rest and training to

⁸³² Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 332-333; Harris, *Haig and the First World War*, pp. 370-371; Prior and Wilson, *Passchendaele: The Untold Story*, pp. 67-110 and 113-114.

⁸³³ TNA, WO95/520, Telegram from Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Sir Launcelot Edward Kiggell, to GOC Fifth Army, Lieutenant-General Hubert Gough, 28th August 1917; Sheffield and Bourne, *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters*, p. 324.

⁸³⁴ Beach, *Haig's Intelligence*, pp. 256-257; Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp.333-337; Harris, *Haig and the First World War*, pp. 376-378; Prior and Wilson, *Passchendaele: The Untold Story*, pp. 113-140 and 159-169.

⁸³⁵ Sheffield and Bourne, *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters*, p. 330.

incorporate an estimated 2,764 reinforcements. Afterwards, they participated in the opening stages of the Second Battle of Passchendaele and made no appreciable gains.⁸³⁶

Though the Canadian Corps were able to launch a series of limited assaults that captured Passchendaele Ridge and village between 26th October and 10th November, it resulted in 12,000 Canadian casualties for an unviable salient. Marking the end of operations, the Third Battle of Ypres had failed to obtain any strategically useful ground or create a definitive breakout. Whilst casualties were lower than the Somme at 275,000, and nearer to German losses at 200,000, this quasi-victory was hollow, as experienced troops and recent drafts were unnecessarily wasted to maintain Haig's overtly ambitious and unrealistic strategic goals. GHQ once again attempted to maintain an unrealistic operational tempo, which led to Divisions fighting for extensive periods without adequate rest. They were denied the time needed, estimated by one divisional commander at one month, to integrate reinforcements, which increased attrition and reduced combat efficiency. Whilst pressure had to be maintained, a slower operational tempo and a careful rotation of divisions that maximised the time for rest and training, could have been implemented with greater success. When the 150,000 losses at the Battle of Arras in April and May are factored in, it is evident that 'hastily prepared assaults supposedly in pursuit of a rapidly deteriorating enemy met disaster, leading to heavy casualties among the hugely valuable assets of highly trained and experienced troops.'⁸³⁷

Overall, GHQ, the Adjutant General and 'A' staff contended with a vast series of challenges, including the rapid expansion of the BEF, the advent of trench warfare and the colossal increase in wastage. They attempted with some success to maintain the BEF during a war of attrition, as they effectively developed the administration and organisation of the reinforcement system to increase the speed drafts were called up, and sent to, the frontline. Yet, GHQ and, in particular, Haig, failed to grasp how the reinforcement system and its limitations affected operational practice. During the attritional campaigns of 1916 and 1917, Haig attempted to achieve an operational tempo that the reinforcement system could not

⁸³⁶ No breakdown of reinforcements has survived for the 7th Division in divisional or brigade war diaries and, as a result, the figure of 2,764 has been taken from the Adjutant General war diary. As the division spent most of its time in the line, most were probably absorbed during their brief period of rest. See; TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, October 1917; TNA, WO95/1633, 7th Division war diary and operational reports, October 1917; TNA, WO95/1637, 7th Division AQMG war diary, October 1917.

⁸³⁷ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 320, 336-338 and 344.

sustain. Drafts from the UK arrived too slowly through the pull system to replace losses and though divisions were regularly rotated to maintain momentum, exchanges took several days to complete. Each formation therefore spent less time in reserve, which led to reinforcements being rushed into battalions at the last minute. This created instability and, without the time to absorb and integrate reinforcements through training, the morale and internal cohesion of battalions suffered, which reduced their combat effectiveness and led to heavier casualties. Despite acknowledging the impact this had in late 1916, Haig's conviction that a breakthrough was possible led him to ignore the detrimental impact attrition and his reinforcement policy had on his own formations. It is clear therefore that GHQ and Haig, though able to adapt the reinforcement system to meet the most pressing demands of industrial warfare, failed to understand how it affected strategy, operational practice and the BEF itself between 1914 and 1917.

Chapter Five

The Cost of Attrition: The Medical and Reinforcement Systems on the Western Front, 1918.

The BEF entered 1918 in a depressed state, having suffered substantial losses through successive campaigns of attrition. The German Army had yet to be broken and the reinforcement system, though functioning, was unable to deliver the requisite number of reinforcements needed to bring the BEF up to establishment. Despite this and the succession of crises that took place during the German Spring Offensive in 1918, the BEF rallied and won a string of victories, known as the Hundred Days Offensive, which forced the German Army to accept an Armistice in November 1918. Whilst historians have primarily focused on this to demonstrate the so-called peak of the learning curve, few have contextualised this within reinforcement policy and the strategy of attrition, nor considered how depleted battalions developed and became more skilled whilst suffering extensive casualties.

Therefore, this chapter will evaluate how the BEF, with reference to the CEF, retained a proportion of its cohesion, skill, and professionalism into 1918, and was able to endure longer than the German Army, despite two years of attrition and the manpower crises it caused. Specifically, it will assess the development and impact of the medical infrastructure on the Western Front and the changes made to reinforcement policy in the wake of the German Spring Offensive. It will demonstrate that the medical system was the most successful aspect of the reinforcement system, as it alleviated the impact of attrition and provided a substantial stream of recovered veterans to the frontline. GHQ's alterations to reinforcement policy, however, were remarkable for other reasons. Though they took sensible measures to ensure the longevity of the BEF after suffering extensive casualties between March and April 1918, neither the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, nor the War Office, exerted complete control over reinforcement policy. Instead, it was the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, General Ferdinand Foch, who steered it. He convinced both Haig and the War Office to abandon their strategy in favour of his in May 1918, which, as will be shown, was significant, as it enabled the Entente to push its numerical and material advantage over the German Army from July 1918. Overall, it will demonstrate that GHQ, though able to adapt the reinforcement system to meet the consequences of the

German Spring Offensive, were junior partners to Foch, who exerted an unparalleled influence on British reinforcement policy in 1918.

Despite the immense casualties and dislocation caused by reinforcement policy and the strategy of attrition since 1916, the historiography broadly agrees that the BEF's tactical performance improved throughout 1917 and 1918 as units became more 'experienced'. For some, this formed part of a learning curve that began at the Battle of Somme in 1916, where tactical approaches became increasingly adept to trench and, eventually, semi-open warfare. By the Hundred Days Offensive in the summer of 1918, the BEF was an experienced army capable of conducting complicated, combined-arms operations, that the German Army could not effectively counter. Though the learning curve is a simplistic overview of the complicated tactical and operational developments that occurred throughout the Great War, especially as each arm had their own experiences and uneven trajectory, the BEF did become more skilled, which contributed to their final victory over the German Army.⁸³⁸ However, the historiography fails to consider how battalions, depicted as almost static in composition, sustained this growth when it suffered extensive casualties that were replaced at short notice with partially-trained reinforcements that were unknown to their unit.⁸³⁹

Two factors underpinned this process. Firstly, GHQ created and developed an elaborate reinforcement training system from 1915, which aimed to remedy any known deficiencies in their skills. Whilst this topic is explored in chapter six, GHQ created an extensive organisation that, by late 1917, gave divisional commanders the opportunity to train reinforcements allocated to their battalions. The second factor was the development of medical infrastructure that 'recycled' wounded veterans back into frontline units. As discussed in chapter two, a substantial proportion of wounded soldiers were evacuated from the Western Front to the UK throughout 1914. In part, this was caused by the high wastage rate, as well as the evacuation of British bases, and most hospitals, on the Seine in late August. It was also linked to pre-war planning in 1912, where the Director of Military Operations, Brigadier-General Henry Wilson, ordered all wounded soldiers needing medical treatment to the UK to boost morale and ease planning difficulties. Though accepted, this decision was

⁸³⁸ For a brief overview of this debate, see; Boff, Jonathan, 'Combined Arms during the Hundred Days Campaign, August–November 1918', *War In History*, 17:4 (2010), pp. 460–463.

⁸³⁹ An exception to this is Mark Connelly's analysis of the Buffs (East Kent) Regiment. See; Connelly, Mark, *Steady the Buffs! A Regiment, A region, and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.7.

contested by the Director-General of Army Medical Services (DGAMS), Lieutenant-Colonel Sir William Launcelotte Gubbins, for two reasons. Firstly, he argued soldiers should not experience long and painful journeys to hospitals at the base or UK and, instead, should receive prompt medical attention nearer to the frontline. Secondly, he was concerned about unnecessary wastage caused by malingering and the administrative chaos within the loosely organised medical system in the UK. As chapter two has demonstrated, DGAMS Gubbins' predictions were partially accurate, as an unmanageable number of wounded were sent back to the UK and administratively lost within the medical system.⁸⁴⁰

Therefore, the rapid expansion of the medical system from 1915 was, 'driven by the need for manpower economy: to treat casualties rapidly and, if possible, return them to active service.'⁸⁴¹ The medical historiography has focused on the pursuit of 'manpower economy' through the development of key medical infrastructure, procedures, and treatments to provide the rapid and effective care needed for rehabilitation. Mark Harrison and Jessica Meyers argue that improvements made to the line of medical evacuation (or casualty disposal) from 1915, such as the greater use of motor ambulances, enabled rapid evacuation, whilst the decision to expand Casualty Clearing Stations (CCS) provided effective, 'forward care' to soldiers nearer the frontline. This, alongside the introduction of innovative treatments and surgical practices, improved the soldier's chances of survival and recovery from infection and damage caused by modern weaponry. Combined with the emphasis placed on hygiene and sanitation, which helped to prevent disease (on the Western Front), the likelihood of evacuation to the UK diminished whilst the chances of full recovery substantially increased.⁸⁴²

Beyond this analysis, however, the medical historiography does not focus on the development of convalescent infrastructure and other medical processes that were designed to 'recycle' personnel back into frontline units. Most historical analyses concentrate on the rehabilitation of severely wounded and disabled servicemen in the UK and only briefly

⁸⁴⁰ TNA, WO95/3949, Report on medical services after the evacuation of Seine British bases, 1st September 1914; Harrison, Mark, *The Medical War: British Military Medicine in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 16-20.

⁸⁴¹ Harrison, *The Medical War*, p. 36.

⁸⁴² Ibid., pp. 16-170; Meyer, Jessica, 'Conserving British Manpower during and after the First World War', in Delaney, Douglas E., Frost, Mark and Brown, Andrew L. (eds), *Manpower and the Armies of the British Empire in the Two World Wars* (London: Cornell University Press, 2021), pp. 43-55.

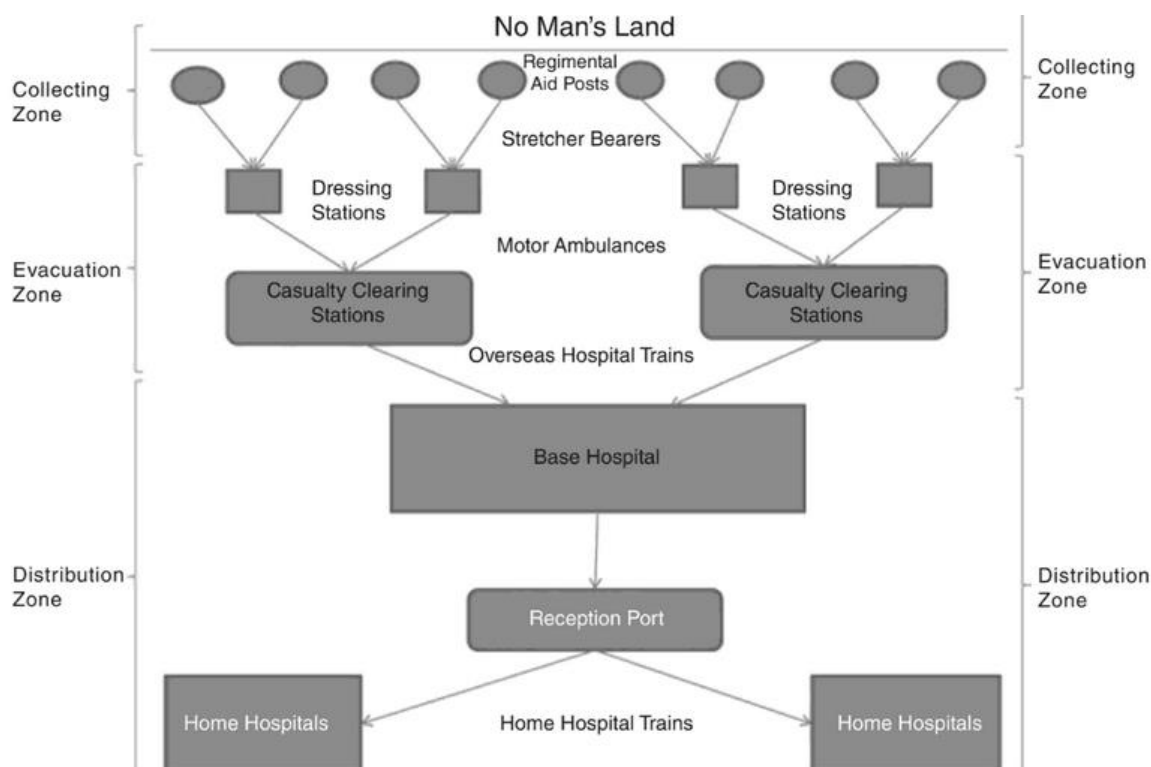
mention some of the methods implemented by GHQ to increase the rate of return. Whilst Harrison argues that these policies were successful, as 67 percent of casualties on the Western Front were not evacuated to the UK and were returned to (an unspecified) military duty, none have evaluated the impact this had on frontline units.⁸⁴³ Therefore, it is critical to assess the changes made to medical infrastructure and procedure to 'recycle' military personnel back into the frontline, and how this impacted military formations and the broader manpower crisis.

Soldiers entered the medical system once they were reported sick by the Regimental Medical Officer or wounded on the battlefield. As displayed in figure 5.1, wounded soldiers were collected on the battlefield by stretcher bearers and carried to Regimental Aid Posts, where wounds were redressed and, if possible, examined. Afterwards, they were sent onto dressing stations administered by field ambulances, where triage and essential operations were performed. Most medical procedures, however, were conducted at the CCS, with many more being evacuated to hospital and, possibly, the UK. Sick soldiers followed similar routes, though they were initially administered by tented sections of each field ambulance and could be sent directly to hospital.⁸⁴⁴ As mentioned earlier, most soldiers who followed this route in 1914 were evacuated to the UK. Many, however, did not require additional treatment and only required a period of rest and convalescence to recover from their wounds. Despite *FSR 1909* stating the need to establish convalescent depots at each hospital, only one of 1,000 beds was mobilised in 1914. Therefore, with growing pressure on hospital beds to treat the severely wounded, many were unnecessarily evacuated to the UK, as feared by DGAMS Gubbins in 1912.⁸⁴⁵

⁸⁴³ Anderson, Julie and Perry, Heather E., 'Rehabilitation and restoration: orthopaedics and disabled soldiers in Germany and Britain in the First World War', *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 30:4 (2014), pp. 227-251; Cooter, Roger, *Surgery and Society in Peace and War: Organization of Modern Medicine, 1880-1948* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993), pp. 105-136; Harrison, *The Medical War*, pp. 38, 57-58, 66, 68-69, 142, 295; Meyer, 'Conserving British Manpower', pp. 51 and 53-54; Perry, Heather E., *Recycling the Disabled: Army, Medicine, and Modernity in WW1 Germany* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

⁸⁴⁴ Buckinghamshire Archives (BA), TA/6/11-14, 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion casualty books, Vols I-IV, 1915-1918; Liverpool Maritime Museum (LMM), King's Regiment Collection (KRC), KR/2/1-3, King's (Liverpool Regiment) casualty books, Vols I-III, 1915-1918; Somerset Archive (SA), Regimental Archive of the Somerset Light Infantry (RASLI), DD/SLI/9/4, 1st Somerset Light Infantry casualty book, 1914-1918; The Royal Welsh Fusiliers Museum (TRWFM), 276, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers casualty books, Vols I and II, 1914-1918; Harrison, *The Medical War*, pp.21-22 and 32.

⁸⁴⁵ *Field Service Regulations, 1909, Part II* (with 1912 amendments) (HMSO: London, 1912), pp. 117 and 124; Macpherson, W. G., *History of the Great War based on Official Documentation: Medical Services, General*

Figure 5.1: Line of medical evacuation.⁸⁴⁶

Therefore, three policies, like those adopted by the War Office, were implemented to recycle manpower back into the BEF. The first policy was the wholesale expansion of convalescent care to retain wounded soldiers, especially those suffering from slight injury or sickness, on the Western Front. This materialised in two ways. Firstly, rest stations, initially located at British bases, were expanded and brought under divisional and, later, corps and army authority. One of the first established was recorded by the 12th Field Ambulance during November 1914, which accommodated 450 men in the French towns of Steenwerck and Bac-Saint-Maur. Roughly 50 percent of soldiers who became sick in 4th and 6th Divisions were sent to the rest station for three to seven days of rest, where they received medical supervision, hot baths, haircuts, and clean clothes. Most just required rest and sleep and, on average, 60 and 55 percent of personnel admitted from 4th and 6th Division respectively were returned to duty. Whilst those that required additional care after seven days were evacuated to hospital

History, Vol. II: The Medical Services on the Western Front, and during Operations in France and Belgium in 1914 and 1915 (London: HMSO, 1923), pp. 84-85.

⁸⁴⁶ Diagram reproduced from; Meyers, Jessica, *An Equal Burden: The Men of the Royal Army Medical Corps in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 90.

or convalescent depots, III Corps estimated a reduction in sick wastage by 1,000 men a month in March 1915.⁸⁴⁷

These successes were built upon and, from 1915, corps and armies created rest centres to accommodate 'trivial cases' and exhausted soldiers. During active operations, minor injuries and sicknesses were automatically directed to rest centres from field ambulances and dressing stations to avoid evacuation to CCS, whilst Corps were given an allotment of beds for 'tired' soldiers. For example, Fifth Army created a rest station at Ault for up to 1,500 soldiers in September 1916. It received minor cases from the frontline and, in addition, allotted 400 beds a week to soldiers from the Canadian Corps, who were relieved of all duties and fatigues. Collectively, this reduced wastage, increased the rate of return and enabled corps to temporarily relieve weary soldiers from frontline duty, which helped to sustain morale and lower sickness rates.⁸⁴⁸

Secondly, convalescent depots were expanded to relieve congestion in hospitals and minimise the evacuation of temporarily unfit soldiers to the UK. Between August 1914 and July 1915, the number of convalescent depots increased from one to nine and each could hold up to 3,000 patients. For instance, No. 1 Convalescent Depot, which was initially designed to hold 1,000 soldiers, had expanded to 2,500 permanent and 500 temporary beds by July 1916. It received patients no longer requiring hospital treatment from Boulogne and Wimeax Hospitals and treated them until they recovered and could perform some form of military duty. Unlike Command Depots and reserve units in the UK, convalescents were not 'hardened' through physical training until late 1916 and early 1917. This was likely due to the severity of the soldiers' wounds as, theoretically, severely wounded men were retained in hospital or evacuated to the UK for specialist treatment. The decision to introduce a concise military training programme, however, coincided with the emerging manpower crisis during the Somme Campaign. Though sports facilities had been created beforehand to encourage soldiers to exercise, convalescent depots received qualified NCOs to perform drill and other military exercises in late 1916. This led to a wholesale expansion and remodelling of

⁸⁴⁷ TNA, WO95/683, III Corps AQMG war diary and memoranda on medical institutions and evacuation methods, November 1914 and January-March 1915.

⁸⁴⁸ TNA, WO95/523, Report on creation of Ault Rest Camp, September 1916; WO95/1055, Canadian Corps AQMG war diary, 2nd October 1916; Harrison, *The Medical War*, p. 68; Macpherson, *Medical Services, General History*, Vol. II, pp. 38-39.

convalescent depot system in France, which was organised to expediate the return of troops. By July 1918 there were 14 British convalescence depots, with most accommodating 2,000 to 5,000 men each. They were organised to harden troops and, under the supervision of an RAMC officer, NCO instructors led soldiers through successive schemes of physical exercise and military training to facilitate a faster recovery.⁸⁴⁹

Though important, Ana Carden-Coyne claims the rationalisation of care in the search for manpower led to patients being mistreated by the military. Specifically, that severely wounded men, yet to fully heal, were forcibly sent to the frontline in the interests of the BEF.⁸⁵⁰ There is an element of truth to this, as, according to the Adjutant General at the War Office, Lieutenant-General Nevil Macready, in May 1917, 'the sick and wounded who have returned from the front are being systematically cured and returned to their units at a rate which would have been considered impossible during the earlier stages of the war, and which to many people is deemed to border on inhumanity.'⁸⁵¹ Indeed, Private Charles Bee was drafted to the 1st Somerset Light Infantry in January 1915 and served with them until April 1918, when he was evacuated to the UK. Yet, during his service, he was admitted to hospital in France and the UK five times. In less than two weeks of active service, he was evacuated to the UK after suffering a wound to the head from either a gunshot or artillery shell. After six months of medical treatment and convalescence in the UK, he was drafted back to the frontline. Within eight weeks, however, he was back in hospital with influenza (after a bout of dysentery beforehand) and, in 1916 and 1917, was hospitalised on three further occasions. Though severe, this was not unique. Private Sidney Dyer from the same battalion was also hospitalised on five occasions and received treatment for a range of sicknesses and injuries, including gas poisoning and a hand wound caused by a gunshot or artillery shell.⁸⁵² The War Cabinet in London considered these state of affairs seriously and, in the wake of Passchendaele, suggested that men wounded twice should not be returned to the front

⁸⁴⁹ TNA, WO95/4118, No. 1 Convalescent Depot war diary, August 1914 – July 1916; TNA, WO95/4119, No. 3 Convalescent Depot war diary, June 1915 – November 1916; Macpherson, *Medical Services, General History*, Vol. II, pp. 84-86

⁸⁵⁰ Carden-Coyne, Ana, *The Politics of Wounds: Military Patients and Medical Power in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 78-79 and 80-85; Meyers, *An Equal Burden*, pp. 5-6.

⁸⁵¹ TNA, WO162/28, 'The Position and Prospects of Recruiting' by Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General sir Nevil Macready, 31st May 1917.

⁸⁵² SA, RASLI, DD/SLI/9/4, entries for Charles Bee and Sidney Dyer, 1st Somerset Light Infantry casualty book, 1914-1918.

line.⁸⁵³ Though this supports Carden-Coyne's argument that some patients were mistreated due to the broader manpower crises, the army relied on fit personnel. If their health deteriorated on the frontline, they were rotated back into hospital or convalescent depots for additional treatment and rest. If men did not sufficiently recover, they were not forced back into the frontline but, as will be discussed, used to comb out fit men in rearward services. Even this approach was considered lenient by the French in 1918, who felt the British were 'hoarding' fit men in auxiliary units through 'over-generous medical requirements.' Therefore, the convalescent system was designed to rehabilitate soldiers and, though some unduly suffered, it sustained frontline units.⁸⁵⁴ Though impossible to determine its overall effect, it was estimated in 1917 that 75.6 percent of soldiers received by convalescent depots were returned to frontline service.⁸⁵⁵

Despite these successes, there were teething issues that initially undermined the effectiveness of the convalescent system. For instance, convalescent depots initially received soldiers who required substantive hospital treatment. Whilst most were transferred back to hospital, it reached critical levels during active operations in 1915 and 1916, when congestion in hospitals and medical transports were acute. During the Second Battle of Ypres in April and May 1915, ambulance trains repeatedly sent severely wounded soldiers to the No. 1 Convalescent Depot. It could not provide effective treatment and, overall, 4,639 of 5,164 admissions in April had to be evacuated to hospitals or the UK. This demand disrupted its usual duties, and the depot effectively became a temporary CCS for several weeks. Though medical services became more adept at casualty disposal, this problem persisted until the early stages of the Somme Campaign, as an estimated 1,600 wounded had to be evacuated from No. 1 Convalescent Depot to hospital or the UK in July 1916. Whilst this could support Leo von Bergen's argument that medical infrastructure was underdeveloped and could not cope with the volume of sick and wounded, medical and convalescent services underwent

⁸⁵³ Hansard, House of Commons Debate (HC), 14th January 1918, Vol. 101, cc. 64-65; Imperial War Museum (IWM), 10414, HHW2/2A/3, Letter from Macready to the British Military Representative on the Supreme War Council, General Sir Henry Wilson, 7th January 1918.

⁸⁵⁴ BA, TA/6/11-14, 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion casualty books, Vols I-IV, 1915-1918; LMM, KRC, KR/2/1-3, King's (Liverpool Regiment) casualty books, Vols I-III, 1915-1918; SA, RASLI, DD/SLI/9/4, 1st Somerset Light Infantry casualty book, 1914-1918; TRWFM, 276, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers casualty books, Vols I and II, 1914-1918; TNA, WO95/26, Summary of GHQ Conference, 23rd August 1917; Carden-Coyne, *The Politics of Wounds*, pp. 78-79 and 80-85; Greenhalgh, Elizabeth, *Foch in Command: The Forging of a First World War General* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 345

⁸⁵⁵ Macpherson, *Medical Services, General History*, Vol. II, p. 87.

significant change and expansion. The DGMS, Lieutenant-General Sir Alfred Keogh, informed the War Cabinet in April 1917 that medical services in France were more than sufficient for the needs of the BEF and, depending on the arrival of American hospitals, could even be reduced.⁸⁵⁶

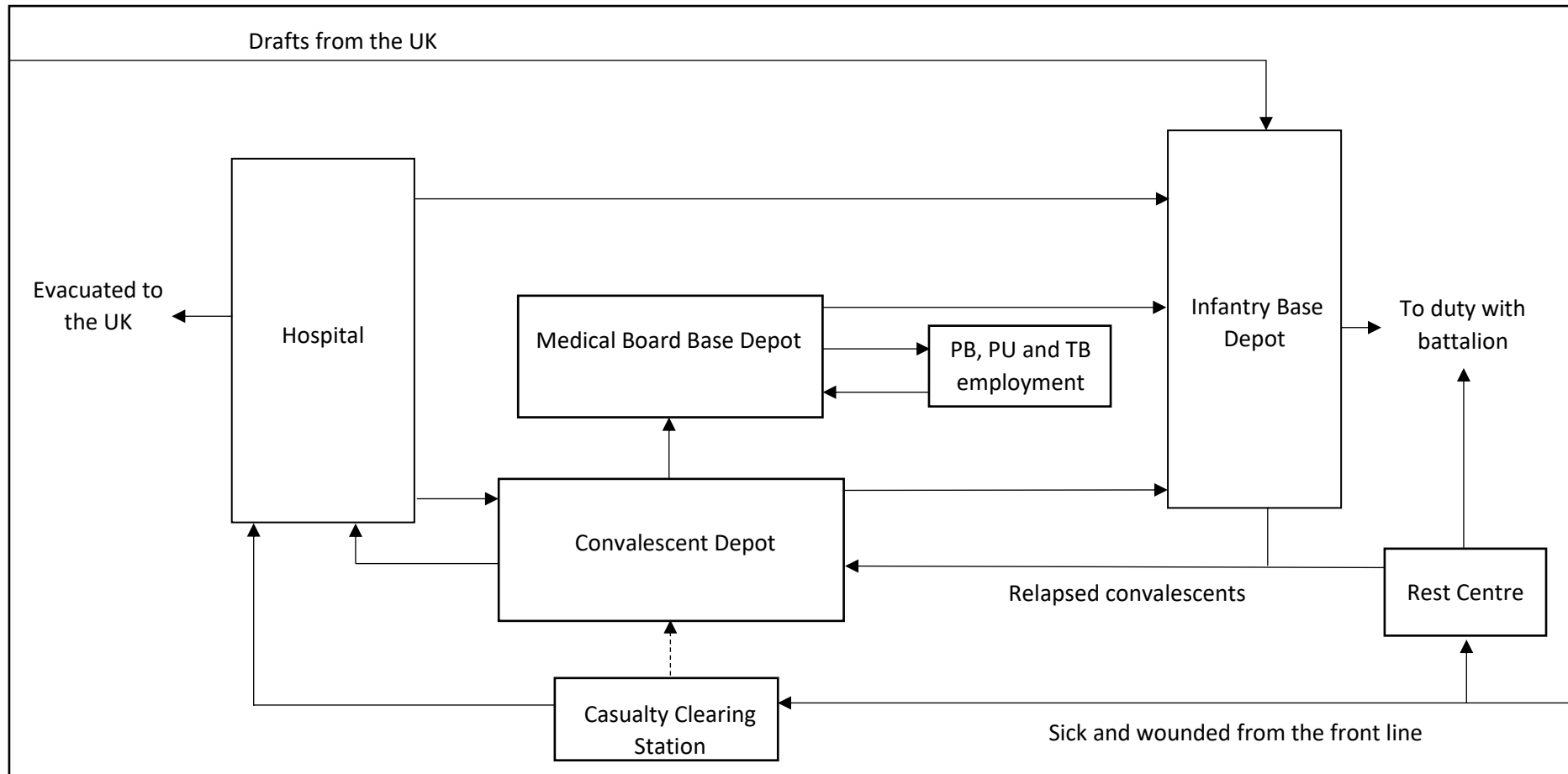
The movement of soldiers through the convalescent system, as illustrated in figure 5.2, was underpinned by the introduction of medical categorisation and boards. Medical grading on the Western Front was different to the system in the UK; it had begun as early as February 1915 and, by December 1916, encompassed five separate categories. Men classified as 'A' grade were considered fit for duty and returned to their regimental reinforcement pools at IBDs, whilst those categorised as 'C' were deemed unfit for military service and evacuated to the UK. The other three categories represented different levels of fitness and likelihoods of making a full recovery. Temporary Base (TB), sometimes referred to as temporary unfit, encompassed men that were temporarily unfit for active service and usually sent to a convalescent depot for recovery. If, after a period of rest, they had not become fit for duty, they were transferred to IBDs or military Headquarters for employment under medical supervision. Permanent Base (PB) consisted of soldiers deemed unfit for general service but capable of other military duties in the rear, such as menial labour or clerking duties on the Lines of Communication. Both groups were examined by medical boards once a month and, if deemed fit, returned to frontline duties. If, after a period of observation, PB soldiers had not made any sign of recovery, they were reclassified as Permanently Unfit (PU) and utilised in their designated trades. If unable to be employed as such, they were returned to the UK.⁸⁵⁷

Though GHQ used these soldiers to relieve 'A' personnel in rearward services, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Lawson's reports in early 1917 recorded a lack of uniformity in

⁸⁵⁶ TNA, CAB23/2/41, 123rd War Cabinet Meeting, Appendix I, 20th April 1917; TNA, WO95/4118, No. 1 Convalescent Depot war diary, April-May 1915 and July 1916; Harrison, *The Medical War*, p. 59; Meyers, *An Equal Burden*, p. 5; van Bergen, Leo, *Before My Helpless Sight: Suffering, Dying and Military Medicine on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 328-338.

⁸⁵⁷ TNA, WO32/5093, Letter from Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig to War Office, 23rd February and 8th April 1917; TNA, WO95/1055, Canadian Corps AQMG war diary, 31st July 1916; TNA, WO95/3953, IGC Routine order 62, February 1915; TNA, WO95/3966, IGC war diary, 23rd March 1916; TNA, WO106/362, 'The number and physical categories of men employed out of the fighting area in France' by Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Lawson, 16th January 1917.

Figure 5.2: Movement of the sick and wounded through the medical system on the Western Front.⁸⁵⁸



⁸⁵⁸ Adapted Diagram from; Macpherson, *Medical Services, General History, Vol. II*, p. 87.

their use and argued greater results could be achieved through a systematic policy of substitution. The 18,821 soldiers of low medical category in France, though substantial, represented less than 31 percent of men on the Lines of Communication in mid-1916 and were haphazardly distributed across the BEF.⁸⁵⁹ Although Lawson did not offer a definitive system to resolve this, he recommended the creation of a flexible labour force that was composed of womanpower, colonial manpower and soldiers of TB, PB and PU categories. By blending these sources together and importing additional 'B' and 'C' recruits from the UK, who were classified as fit for garrison service, labour or sedentary duties abroad and in North-Western Europe respectively, the BEF could achieve a 'true economy' in manpower. To achieve this, he suggested that 'A' grade soldiers employed between the frontline and army zones should be relieved by PB and TB men on the Lines of Communication, who themselves would be replaced by women and a combination of colonial and low category British manpower.⁸⁶⁰

Although Haig, as mentioned in chapter four, resisted aspects of Lawson's report, he did accept this suggestion and informed the War Office in April 1917 that his overarching goal was to substitute 'A' graded soldiers through the methods outlined above. Womanpower and Colonial manpower would be utilised to relieve as many 'A', PB and TB men as possible on the Lines of Communication. 'A' graded soldiers would be returned to their units or sent to IBDs for distribution, whilst PB and TB men would be used, alongside Prisoners of War and 'B' and 'C' recruits from the UK, to relieve the 50,000 soldiers on extra-regimental employment between the frontline and Army zones. Although aspects of this system changed, such as the eventual use of Chinese and Indian labour in forward army zones, this system remained in place until the Armistice.⁸⁶¹

⁸⁵⁹ TNA, WO32/5093, letters between Haig and War Office, February-April 1917; TNA, WO106/362, 'Men employed out of the fighting area in France' by Lawson, 16th January 1917; TNA, WO106/363, 'The number and physical categories of men employed out of the fighting area in France (in Continuation of Report dated January 16th. 1917) and on economy of manpower in the fighting areas in France' by Lawson, 8th February 1917; Kilson, Robin Wallace, 'Calling up the Empire: The British Military use of non-white labor in France, 1916-1920' (Harvard University PhD Thesis, 1990), p. 121.

⁸⁶⁰ TNA, WO106/362, 'Men employed out of the fighting area in France' by Lawson, 16th January 1917; TNA, WO106/363, 'Economy of man power in the fighting areas in France' by Lawson, 8th February 1917; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Army*, p. 308.

⁸⁶¹ TNA, WO32/5093, Letters from Haig to War Office, 11th March and 8th April 1917; TNA, WO95/26, Summary of GHQ Conference, 23rd August 1917; Kilson, 'Calling up the Empire', p. 183; Singha, Radhika, 'The Short Career of the Indian labour Corps in France, 1917-1919', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 87 (2015), pp. 37 and 42-43.

There were, however, difficulties in implementing this system due to chronic recruitment problems within the WAAC and QMAAC. As noted, Lawson's report advocated the substitution of manpower with womanpower, and recommended the immediate employment of 12,100 women.⁸⁶² They would undertake roles similar to those being performed in the UK by organisations such as the Women's Legion and, by 1918, had seven different groups of occupations, including clerical work, cooks and driver mechanics, to choose from.⁸⁶³ Yet, it is evident upon closer analysis that the total number of women employed in the WAAC failed to reach the initial goals outlined by Lawson. Estimates vary, but, overall, no more than 8,000 to 9,600 women served with the WAAC in France at any one time.⁸⁶⁴

Despite the importance of this, the failure to use womanpower to create surplus manpower has only generated a small amount of academic scholarship. Military historians have overwhelmingly focused upon male serviceman and, beyond a cursory note, failed to acknowledge or analyse the contribution of their female counterparts. Others have provided valuable analyses upon womanpower, but they have viewed the WAAC and QMAAC, as well as other female organisations, through the prism of cultural history. Though they focus upon important themes, including gender and modernity, this has led to a shift away from military debates upon manpower policy. As a result, they have concentrated upon individual women and services, and have considered 'the challenges they faced in entering the male military bastion.'⁸⁶⁵ Despite this gap, historians have noted that Haig's attitude was a hinderance to

⁸⁶² TNA, WO106/362, 'Men employed out of the fighting area in France' by Lawson, 16th January 1917; WO162/34, Conference on creation of WAAC, 6th February 1917.

⁸⁶³ TNA, WO162/59, Schedule of occupations for WAAC [ND], but December 1917; Noakes, Lucy, *Women in the British Army: War and the gentle sex, 1907-1948* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 58-59.

⁸⁶⁴ *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire in the Great War* (London: HMSO, 1922), p. 206; Dennant, Lydia, 'Woman at the Front during the First World War: The politics of Class, Gender and Empire' (University of Warwick PhD Thesis, 1998), p. 89; Philo-Gill, Samantha, *The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in France, 1917-1921* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2017); Shaw, Diana, 'The Forgotten Army of Women: The Overseas Service of Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps with the British Forces, 1917-1921' in Cecil, Hugh and Liddle, Peter (eds), *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced* (London: Leo Cooper, 2003), p. 365; Walsh, Barbara, 'The Key Role Played by WAAC British Post Office Female Staff in Army Signal Units on the Western Front, 1917-1920', *Information and Culture*, 55:1 (2020), pp. 81-82.

⁸⁶⁵ Bowen, Claire, 'W.A.A.C.s: Crossing the line in the Great War', *Voicing Conflict: Women and 20th Century Warfare*, 2 (2010), pp. 1-8; Crang, Jeremy A., *Sisters in Arms: Women in the British Armed Forces during the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 5-6; Gould, Jenny, 'Women's Military Services in First World War', in Higonett, Margaret Randolph (ed.), *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (London: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 114-125; Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, pp. 36-81; Pattinson, Juliette, *Women of War: Gender, Modernity and the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

the employment of woman, as he was initially sceptical about the number he could 'safely' employ in the BEF. He told the War Office that utilising womanpower, as outlined by Lawson, would be difficult for a number of reasons, including the need for suitable accommodation and white guards when in close proximity to colonial labour. Though Haig recognised the importance of womanpower in supporting the BEF, as seen by his demand for 5,000 female clerks in April 1917, he was influenced by contemporary beliefs about gender roles.⁸⁶⁶ Even though all-female volunteer organisations, such as the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry, had already demonstrated their value overseas by working at Regimental Aid Posts and becoming the first official women's ambulance convoy for the British Army in 1914 and 1916 respectively, Haig feared women were unsuited for demanding military work.⁸⁶⁷ Therefore, he claimed that substitution, as outlined by Lawson, could only be achieved through dilution, which required a larger number of women to do the same amount of work as their male counterparts. Originally, he suggested 200 women could perform the work of 134 male clerks, but the War Office agreed to a ratio of 4 women to every 3 men.⁸⁶⁸

This increased demand, though problematic, was exacerbated by the difficulties experienced in recruiting the WAAC for overseas service, which remained low until March 1918. Although skilled and semi-skilled positions, such as typists, telephonists, and telegraphists, were easier to fill due to higher pay, it was increasingly difficult to obtain the services of working class women for unskilled occupations such as cooking, cleaning, and domestic positions. The poor pay, career prospects and service conditions offered could not compete with the domestic market, which offered better paid jobs in a variety of sectors, including munitions. Only when the domestic job market began to contract in the Spring of 1918 did recruitment improve. Thus, fewer economic opportunities, combined with a greater desire to serve due to the anxiety caused by the German Spring Offensive, led to the WAAC expanding threefold between March and August 1918.⁸⁶⁹ Though positive, the WAAC, due to

⁸⁶⁶ TNA, WO32/5093, Letters from Haig to War Office, 23rd February and 11th March 1917.

⁸⁶⁷ Pattinson, *Women of War*, pp. 165-205 and 263.

⁸⁶⁸ TNA, WO162/55, Letter from War Office to National Service Department, 28th April 1917; Noakes, *Women in the British Army*, pp. 64-65; Shaw, 'The Forgotten Army of Women', pp. 365-366.

⁸⁶⁹ TNA, WO162/34, Conference on WAAC recruitment, 16th and 31st May, 16th July and 24th November 1917; TNA, WO162/55, Letter from National Service Department to War Office, 28th April and 3rd May 1917; Lamm, Doron, 'Emily Goes to War: Explaining the Recruitment to the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in World War I', in Melman, Billie (ed.), *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace, 1878-1930* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 377-395; Walsh, 'WAAC British Post Office Female Staff', pp. 87-90.

a combination of recruitment difficulties and dilution, had failed to relieve a large number of 'A', PB and TB soldiers in the rear until mid-1918. Rather than provide a minimum of 12,000 men for the BEF, the WAAC only replaced an estimated 6,000 to 7,200 men by November 1918.⁸⁷⁰

In comparison, the expansion of colonial labour was relatively successful. 63,613 non-white workers had arrived on the Western Front by July 1917 and, overall, an estimated 200,000 men served on the Western Front, with at least 96,000, 23,000 and 20,000 drawn from China, Egypt, and South Africa, respectively. Whilst most were drawn from unskilled peasantry populations, who were vital for fulfilling menial labour tasks between British ports and the frontline, there was also a proportion of skilled and semi-skilled workers who provided specialist services. For example, there were 4,725 skilled workers in the Chinese Labour Corps, which were split across companies that worked in tank and light railway workshops. Whilst a small contingent, they were seen as vital for filling the gap in skilled labourers needed to repair tanks on the Western Front.⁸⁷¹

Though positive, various government and military organisations had been reluctant to utilise colonial manpower on the Western Front, which delayed the wide-scale recruitment and deployment of non-white labourers until 1917. Suggestions about the use of colonial manpower as soldiers or labourers had begun in 1915 but were blocked for numerous reasons.⁸⁷² Early resistance in parts of the War Office can be attributed to the prevailing racial and prejudice attitudes encapsulated in the martial race theory. This rose to prominence after the Indian Mutiny/Rebellion in 1857 and classified the supposed soldiering qualities of non-white societies through ethnographic studies, which focused on a variety of factors, including 'biological qualities', culture, and climate. Whilst the Indian Army was closely modelled on the martial race theory from 1885 and had been trained to fight a 'white European' army since

⁸⁷⁰ This figure is based upon the approximate number of women that served on the Western Front and the ratio of dilution adopted. Considering an estimated 8,000 to 9,600 women served overseas in the WAAC at any one time and every four women employed were used to relieve three men, only an estimated 6,000 to 7,200 men were combed out of rearward services.

⁸⁷¹ Griffin, Nicholas J., 'Britain's Chinese Labor Corps in World War I', *Military Affairs*, 40:3 (1976), pp. 105-106; Guoqi, Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front: Chinese Workers in the Great War* (London: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp.90-91; Kilson, 'Calling up the Empire', pp. 4-5, 8, 63-64, 149 and 264; Smith, Richard, *Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War: Race, masculinity and the development of national consciousness* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 86.

⁸⁷² Kilson, 'Calling up the Empire', pp. 109-110, 125-126 and 219-220.

the 1890s, parts of the British Empire, such as the West Indies, were underutilised by military authorities due to the supposed racial characteristics of the colonial population. Indeed, the West Indies Regiment was never deployed on the Western Front and, by 1918, had only seen limited service at company level on the Lines of Communication across colonial campaigns in Africa. Though, as will be discussed, the British West Indies Regiment served on the Western Front from 1916, the initial proposal to form a volunteer force for overseas service was firmly rejected in August 1914.⁸⁷³

There were also political concerns in British and Dominion governments about the use of colonial forces against other white European nations. Even though the War Cabinet asked all colonies and Dominions to consider raising native troops for imperial service on 8th October 1915, fears that this could undermine racial hierarchy and civil rule across the British Empire persisted into 1916. For example, the South African government and, to an extent, the British Colonial Office, were reluctant to provide a contingent of native South Africans for the Western Front. Though both agreed to provide a labour contingent after repeated requests from the War Office in June 1916, this was based on a number of pre-conditions. Amongst others, native South Africans had to be accommodated in 'closed compounds' in order to avoid interaction with other labourers and the French populace, as exposure to a more tolerant society might undermine South African's strict racial hierarchy. Whilst other points of resistance were outside British control, including France's undisclosed opposition to the use of Egyptian labour at French ports in early 1916, it was only after the sheer volume of casualties at the Somme in 1916 and the greater demand for unskilled labour that led to rapid recruitment.⁸⁷⁴

Even then, some colonial forces were used ineffectively. For example, the British West Indies Regiment, created in 1915 and composed of volunteers from Jamaica and other Caribbean islands, were forcibly converted from an infantry to a labour regiment upon arrival

⁸⁷³ Morton-Jack, George, *The Indian Army on the Western Front: India's Expeditionary Force to France and Belgium in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 34-35, 46-52 and 134-135; Roy, Kaushik, *Indian Army and the First World War* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 21-26; Smith, *Jamaican Volunteers*, pp. 58-61 and 81-82.

⁸⁷⁴ TNA, WO95/3975, IGC AQMG war diary, 23rd March 1916; Grundlingh, Albert, *Fighting Their Own War: South African Blacks and the First World War* (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1987), pp. 39-43; Guoqi, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp. 24-26; Kilson, 'Calling up the Empire', pp. 89-90 and 106-107; Winegard, Timothy C., *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 97-98 and 137-139.

at the Western Front in 1916. Unsurprisingly, this, as well as their reclassification from a 'British' to 'Native' unit, undermined morale. They were denied the right to serve on the frontline due to concerns about their 'racial qualities', whilst simultaneously being marred by the 'inferior status' associated with labour battalions. Along with racial discrimination, which led to inferior medical care, harsher discipline and limited access to recreational facilities, the men's motivation plummeted. From December 1917, discipline broke down in units stationed in Taranto, where men were employed as Stevedores. Output was considered low throughout 1918 and, after local Italian labour received better pay and conditions in November, the 9th and 10th British West Indies Regiment 'mutinied' by refusing to work in December. Though serious, this was not wholly unique, as other colonial labourers, such as Egyptian workers at Taranto in September 1917, went on 'strike' over issues of service conditions. Whilst the 'mutiny' was quickly resolved, it demonstrates the improper management of some colonial units and, more broadly, Britain's reluctance to utilise most non-white forces as frontline troops, which could have alleviated the broader manpower crisis in Britain.⁸⁷⁵

These drawbacks are even more striking when compared to France, which heavily recruited across its colonies and had, by 1918, deployed 500,000 *troupes indigènes* on the Western Front as combatants or labourers. Though influenced by their own martial race theories, which excluded most of the 96,000 Indochina and Madagascan recruits from serving on the frontline, France had tapped a large reserve of colonial manpower from 1914. They were also more willing to enlist non-white labourers from neutral counties to support its war effort. For example, the French approached the Chinese government about recruiting its populace as labourers in June 1915, whilst Britain refused any such scheme until August 1916. Though, in part, this was due to a combination of factors unique to France, including its republican ideology and acute manpower crisis from 1915, it is clear British authorities were overtly reluctant to utilise colonial personnel until their own manpower crisis emerged in 1916.⁸⁷⁶

⁸⁷⁵ Smith, *Jamaican Volunteers*, pp. 55-130.

⁸⁷⁶ Fogarty, Richard S., *Race and War in France: Colonials Subjects in the French Army, 1914-1918* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp. 1-95; Guoqi, *Strangers on the Western Front*, pp. 16-27.

Table 5.1: Proportion of 'recycled reinforcements' received in drafts by four battalions, 1914-1918.⁸⁷⁷

	1st Somerset light Infantry		1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers		1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment)		1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion		Total		
Date	Drafts*	Recycled reinforcements**	Drafts	Recycled reinforcements	Drafts	Recycled reinforcements	Drafts	Recycled reinforcements	Total Drafts	Total recycled reinforcements	Recycled ratio (%)
1914	356	5	355	4	0	0	0	0	711	9	1.2
1915	440	136	379	215	64	65	19	3	902	419	31.7
1916	332	139	311	62	239	77	265	114	1,147	392	25.5
1917	276	129	265	97	402	83	251	101	1,194	410	25.6
1918	503	163	113	26	356	87	53	75	1,025	351	25.5
Total	1,907	572	1,423	404	1,061	312	588	293	4,979	1,581	24.1
%	76.9	23.1	77.9	22.1	77.3	22.7	66.7	33.3	75.9	24.1	

* All drafts, whether reinforcements, posted or transferred, that have no record of being wounded and returned via IBDs or the UK.

** All drafts, whether reinforcements, posted or transferred, that have been recorded as wounded and returned via IBDs or the UK.

⁸⁷⁷ BA, TA/6/11-14, 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion casualty books, Vols I-IV, 1915-1918; LMM, KRC, KR/2/1-3, King's (Liverpool Regiment) casualty books, Vols I-III, 1915-1918; SA, RASLI, DD/SLI/9/4, 1st Somerset Light Infantry casualty book, 1914-1918; TRWFM, 276, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers casualty books, Vols I and II, 1914-1918.

Despite difficulties with colonial labour and the WAAC, it allowed a greater number of PB and TB men to be utilised between the frontline and army zones. In particular, PB men not on the establishment of a formation were transferred to the newly established Labour Corps and formed into Area Employment Companies and Garrison Guard Companies. Collectively, they replaced 'A' soldiers on extra-regimental employment and performed fatigues and basic labour for frontline units, which reduced the number of personnel withdrawn from rest or training. It served the dual purpose of relieving 'A' men for the frontline and giving unfit soldiers the time needed to fully recover from wounds, which GHQ estimated at 4,750 PB and TB soldiers every six months.⁸⁷⁸

Overall, the development of the medical system had a substantial impact at the regimental level. Table 5.1, based upon the same sample in chapters two and four, calculates the proportion of recycled reinforcements in drafts received by the 1st Somerset Light Infantry, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers, 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) and 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion between 1914 and 1918. Due to a lack of archival evidence to determine when a soldier was officially struck off the strength of his battalion and became liable for drafting, a methodology based upon the route they took through the medical system was created to determine whether a man was a recycled reinforcement. If a soldier was treated in the medical system after frontline service and drafted to his or another unit via an IBD or the UK, they are considered a recycled reinforcement. IBDs were, as shown in figure 5.2, the lynchpin of the reinforcement system on the Western Front, as it connected the rearward medical services to the reinforcement systems on the Western Front and the UK. They housed all reinforcements and, as part of their regimental reinforcement pool, were liable to be drafted to any frontline unit or regiment. Conversely, if a soldier was in the medical system, anywhere between field ambulances to convalescent depots, and simply discharged and returned to their unit, they were likely to be on its strength. They were not a new reinforcement and, administratively, were only away from their battalion on a temporary basis.

⁸⁷⁸ TNA, WO106/362, 'Men employed out of the fighting area in France' by Lawson, 16th January 1917; TNA, WO32/5091, Letter from Haig to Army Council, 27th April 1917.

This methodology has created a conservative estimate, however. Firstly, men that travelled across the medical system, some for months at a time, were not included as recycled reinforcements if they were not recorded as coming from an IBD. Whilst they were unlikely to have been kept on a unit's strength for such a long period, it was impossible to verify without additional archival documentation. Secondly, it was difficult to determine whether men being sent out in drafts from the UK were recycled reinforcements. Casualty books did not state previous medical history unless they had already served in the battalion and, therefore, it was entirely possible for someone to be wounded in one battalion, returned to the UK, and recorded as a new reinforcement upon arrival at a different unit in France. Though, at times, this could be verified through service records, it is impossible to determine the total number of convalescents coming from the UK. Therefore, the overall results should be treated as a very conservative estimate that was, in reality, much larger.⁸⁷⁹

Nevertheless, table 5.1 demonstrates that an estimated 24.1 percent of all drafts were recycled reinforcements.⁸⁸⁰ As expected, only a tiny proportion of drafts in 1914, roughly 1.9 percent, were recycled reinforcements. Most, as discussed, were evacuated to the UK and were unlikely to quickly return to active duty. The spike to 31.7 percent in 1915, though large, is logical when considering the wholesale expansion of the medical system and the relatively limited campaigning in 1915, which led to a smaller proportion of severe wounds. From 1916 to 1918, during the height of industrial warfare, the medical systems created a regular output of recycled reinforcements, equating to 25.5 to 25.6 percent each year. Though a six percent drop from 1915, the development of the medical services had coped with the BEF's expansion and enabled it to rehabilitate a large proportion of wounded veterans during the extensive campaigns of attrition.

At the regimental level, the 1st Somerset Light Infantry, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers and 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) received the same proportion of recycled reinforcements, estimated between 22.1 and 23.7 percent of all drafts. The 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion was the only anomaly at 33.3 percent, demonstrating their reliance on recycled

⁸⁷⁹ For further information on the methodology and sample, see appendix 1.

⁸⁸⁰ All statistics noted in this and proceeding paragraphs, unless specified, comes from the dataset and sources used in table 5.1.

reinforcements.⁸⁸¹ This does, however, gloss over many of the key differences experienced on a year-by-year basis, which was influenced by three factors. As with transfers and regimental integrity, battlefield casualties affected this. For example, 23.6 and 36.2 percent of drafts received in 1915 by the 1st Somerset Light Infantry and 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers respectively were recycled reinforcements. Whilst the 1st Somerset Light Infantry only participated in the Second Battle of Ypres and suffered 220 casualties, the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers had, collectively, lost 1,020 during the Battle of Festubert and Loos in May and September 1915, respectively.⁸⁸² Therefore, it was more likely that the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers would have a larger number of recycled reinforcements.

The second factor was the Territorial Pledge between 1915 and mid-1916. As mentioned in chapter two, the pledge was a promise from the War Office that Territorials would only fight with their unit and, legally, they could not be transferred to another corps against their will. Therefore, with fewer reinforcements coming across from the UK, some TF units, such as the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment), became reliant on rehabilitated veterans to make up losses. On average, 50.4 percent of drafts received by the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) were recycled reinforcements and, considering the battalion had excellent recruitment prospects in Liverpool, it was likely more fortunate than most.

The 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion, however, had a minority of recycled reinforcements in 1915. Whilst it also suffered from the restrictions placed upon it by the pledge, this trend was caused by where it served on the Western Front. Arriving in March 1915, the battalion was stationed on a very quiet part of the line at Ploegsteert Wood and Hébuterne, located on the right of the Ypres salient and south of Gommecourt, respectively. It spent most of 1915 holding the line, providing work parties, and instructing New Army battalions upon their arrival at the front. Recording its highest daily losses at six men on 1st June 1915, the battalion only needed a handful of reinforcements to sustain it. Therefore, with limited casualties and no great need for manpower, recycled reinforcements only made up 13.6 percent of all drafts in 1915.⁸⁸³

⁸⁸¹ For more information on social composition of reinforcements, see chapter two.

⁸⁸² TNA, WO95/1499, 1st Somerset Light Infantry war diary, 5th May 1915; WO95/1665, 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers war diary, 16th May and 25th September 1915.

⁸⁸³ TNA, WO95/2763, 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion war diary, March-December 1915.

Whilst battlefield casualties, the Territorial Pledge and area of deployment all affected this process, the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion was unique in 1918 for 58.6 percent of its drafts being composed of recycled reinforcements. Whilst excessive compared to other battalions, this is not surprising considering the broader manpower difficulties it experienced from 1916. As mentioned in chapter two, the regiment was unable to sustain its regimental reinforcement pool from local recruitment and, as a result, relied on manpower from Southern Command and London. Combined with the high number of transfers mentioned in chapter four, the increasing dependence on recycled reinforcements represents the severe manpower situation faced by the regiment. Though its transfer to the Italian Front may have influenced this, the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers remained unaffected. Therefore, the 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion's unique situation demonstrates how some regiments were heavily dependent upon recycled reinforcements to continue frontline service.

Despite this trend, many complained that wounded soldiers were not returned to their original units. For example, records kept by the 1/16th London Regiment (Queen's Westminster Rifles) estimate that only 34 of 354 men, or 9.6 percent, returned from hospital within three months of evacuation between November 1914 and January 1916.⁸⁸⁴ Fourth Army claimed in 1917 that sick and wounded NCOs evacuated to the UK were not returned, whilst the official historian, Sir James Edmonds, criticised 3rd Echelon for not drafting recycled reinforcements back to their original units.⁸⁸⁵ Though supported by the Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General G. H. Fowke, in June 1918, who noted the unlikelihood of men returning to their battalion upon recovery, casualty books show that most recycled reinforcements in France were drafted back to their original unit.⁸⁸⁶ Though it is impossible to determine the number of wounded soldiers redistributed from the UK, only 188 of 6,560 soldiers surveyed were drafted to another unit or regiment via an IBD after treatment within the medical system in France.

⁸⁸⁴ TNA, WO95/683, III Corps war diary and memoranda, January 1915; Hampshire Record Office (HRO), The Royal Green Jackets Regimental Archive (TRGJRA), 170A12W/D/0289, 1/16th London Regiment (Queen's Westminster Rifles) log book, November 1914 – January 1916.

⁸⁸⁵ TNA, WO95/442, Fourth Army 'A and Q' notes, 29th March 1917; Edmonds, J. E., *Military History: France and Belgium, 1918*, Vol. V (London: HMSO, 1947), p. 179.

⁸⁸⁶ Hine, Alison, *Refilling Haig's Armies: The Replacement of British Infantry Casualties on the Western Front, 1916-1919* (Warwick: Helion, 2018), p. 250.

The success of the medical system was crucial for two reasons. Firstly, it supplemented the flow of reinforcements from the UK by providing a significant and consistent stream of rehabilitated veterans to frontline units. This was vital once the manpower crisis emerged and, between 1916 and 1918, supplied at least one quarter of drafts to the BEF. Considering this is an absolute minimum and Haig estimated that as many as two-thirds of recycled reinforcements came from the UK in November 1916, the total must be larger.⁸⁸⁷ Secondly, these men were trained veterans that had battlefield experience. This was vital in a war of attrition, as it enabled units to not only rebuild after an offensive, but to retain a proportion of its cohesion, skill, and professionalism. Therefore, the medical system was the most innovative and successful part of the reinforcement system. It was crucial to sustaining the BEF and enabled it to continue developing despite the horrific losses it sustained.

The medical system could not, however, alter the fact that the strategy of attrition had cost the BEF dearly, which was 100,000 below establishment in January 1918. As discussed in chapter three, the BEF had little to no prospect of immediate reinforcement, as civil-military relations between the War Cabinet, GHQ and the War Office had broken down. Politicians, including the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, became increasingly alarmed by British casualties throughout 1917 and, after the success of the German counter-offensive at the Battle of Cambrai on 30th November 1917, had lost faith in Haig's ability to prosecute the war successfully. Convinced that the Entente should conserve its manpower and resources until 1919, once the American Army on the Western Front had become operational, Lloyd George considered how British manpower could be economised through firepower and mechanisation. Though this did not represent an attempt to block manpower as some argue, this desire, as well as the growing demand for labour on the Home front, led to the formation of the Manpower Committee in December 1917, which created the first coherent policy on the strategic distribution of manpower between the army and industry. The former, ranked fifth in priority under the Royal Navy, air services, ship building, aircraft and tank production and the provision of raw materials, was allocated 370,000 men in 1918. 120,000 were 'A IV' youths aged 18, who would be classified as ready for active service upon turning 19, whilst 150,000 'A' and 100,000 'B' men would be used as reinforcements for frontline and rearward

⁸⁸⁷ TNA, WO32/5091, Letter from Haig to War Office, 13th November 1916.

units, respectively. As this did not resolve the twofold problem of replenishing and sustaining the BEF for another year of operations, the Manpower Committee recommended, as the War Cabinet had suggested since February 1917, the reduction of divisions from 13 to 10 battalions.⁸⁸⁸ Considering the implications, the Adjutant General at the War Office, General Nevil Macready, admitted 'it [manpower] is a terrifying state of affairs... I cannot for the life of me see how it is going to be mended.'⁸⁸⁹

GHQ and the War Office, therefore, had little choice but to restructure the BEF to reduce wastage and resolve the immediate manpower crisis it faced. Haig, provided with a list of regiments to choose from, was ordered by the War Office to reduce each division from 13 to 10 battalions.⁸⁹⁰ Though GHQ preferred to disband entire divisions, as it would reduce manpower demands for supporting arms and cause the least disruption from an organisational and tactical perspective, it was politically unacceptable to the French, who would not agree to any reduction in the amount of line held by the BEF.⁸⁹¹ Therefore, instructions from the War Office outlined that no regular, first line Territorial or (amalgamated) Yeomanry battalion could be disbanded. Fourth, third and second line Territorial battalions should be selected first and, in relation to service battalions, senior units were prioritised over their junior counterparts. Personnel were used to bring battalions within

⁸⁸⁸ Hansard, HC, 14th January 1918, Vol. 101, cc. 63-64; IWM, 10414, HHW 2/2A/1-2, Letters from Macready to Wilson, 13th December 1917 and 2nd January 1918; TNA, CAB23/4/75-76, 301st and 302nd War Cabinet Meeting, 18th and 19th December 1917; TNA, CAB23/5/14, 322nd War Cabinet Meeting, 15th January 1918; TNA, NATS1/354, 'Maintenance of the forces' by Geddes, 24th March 1918; Beckett, Ian, Bowman, Timothy, and Connelly, Mark, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 350; Grieves, Keith, *The Politics of Manpower, 1914-1918* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 160-174; Harris, J. P., *Douglas Haig and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 419-420; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 222; Woodward, David R. (ed.), *The Military Correspondence of Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson, Chief of the General Staff, December 1915-February 1918* (London: The Bodley Head for the Army Records Society, 1989), pp. 147-148.

⁸⁸⁹ IWM, 10414, HHW 2/2A/3, Letter from Macready to Wilson, 7th January 1918.

⁸⁹⁰ Justice, Simon M., 'Vanishing Battalions: The Nature, Impact and Implications of British Infantry Reorganisation prior to the German Spring Offensive of 1918', in Locicero, Michael, Mahoney, Ross and Mitchell, Stuart (eds), *A Military Transformed?: Adaptation and Innovation in the British Military, 1792-1945* (Solihull: Helion, 2014), pp. 158-159.

⁸⁹¹ TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office; Greenhalgh, Elizabeth, *The French Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 267-268; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 222-223.

the regiment up to establishment, with the surplus used for labour in the recently reconstituted entrenching battalions.⁸⁹²

Estimates vary but, by March 1918, 116 battalions were disbanded, whilst 18 second, third and fourth line Territorial units were amalgamated with their respective first line counterparts. Seven battalions were also converted into pioneers, most likely in an attempt to reduce their manpower demands.⁸⁹³ The primary principle guiding this process was to, 'improve the relationship between the number of battalions in a regiment and the availability of reinforcements for that regiment' in the UK.⁸⁹⁴ As Haig's new Chief of Staff, Major-General Sir Herbert Lawrence, informed army commanders in January 1918, numerous regiments could no longer be supported by the output of recruits from their territorial districts. Therefore, to reduce the liability of these regiments and safeguard their regional identity, the War Office had outlined the number of battalions each regiment had to disband.⁸⁹⁵

Appendix 4, which lists the 134 battalions disbanded or amalgamated, identifies two groups of regiments affected by these changes.⁸⁹⁶ Firstly, regiments from Western and Northern Command were selected, as they had undergone the largest expansion since 1914.⁸⁹⁷ In total, 75 battalions, or 56 percent, were disbanded from these regions, mostly from the counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Though fertile recruitment grounds, these two counties struggled to support the several large regiments affiliated to them, especially once the manpower demands of the wartime economy was factored in. Therefore, 22 and 23 battalions from Lancashire and Yorkshire respectively were disbanded or amalgamated,

⁸⁹² TNA, WO32/18591, Memorandum on reorganisation from Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Sir Herbert Lawrence, to Army Headquarters, 23rd January 1918.

⁸⁹³ See appendix 4 for further information and the following sources for a range of estimates; TNA, WO32/18591, Memoranda on reorganisation, 23rd and 31st January 1918; Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 350; Edmonds, J. E., *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. I* (London: Macmillan, 1935), p. 55; Harris, *Haig and the First World War*, p. 433; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 224-225; Justice, 'Vanishing Battalions', p. 160; Perry, F. W., *The Commonwealth Armies: Manpower and organisation in Two World Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 28-30.

⁸⁹⁴ Perry, *Commonwealth Armies*, p. 28.

⁸⁹⁵ TNA, WO32/18591, Memorandum on reorganisation, 23rd January 1918.

⁸⁹⁶ Unless specified, all information drawn from appendix 4.

⁸⁹⁷ Home Commands were temporarily suspended and replaced by new Territorial recruitment regions when the Ministry of National Service took over recruitment from the War Office in November 1917. See; 1917 (Cd. 8833) *National service instruction. N.S.I. No. 2 of 1917. Constitution and organisation of regions, regional headquarters and recruiting areas, and transfer of recruiting to civil control under the Minister of National Service.*

which was essential to safeguarding their regional homogeneity. The second group was 'national units' from Ireland and Wales. As most recruits were drawn from England and had been used since 1916 to make up the shortfall in Irish and Welsh recruits, 12 and eight battalions from Irish and Welsh regiments were chosen for disbandment, respectively. Scottish regiments were left intact and only the 17th Highland Light Infantry was disbanded. The output of Scottish recruits was considered sufficient enough to maintain the national identities of regiments, which, as noted in chapter four, had been reduced in size through disbandment and amalgamation since 1916.⁸⁹⁸

Though important to preserve the regional homogeneity of regiments in 1918, this complicated the process of reorganisation as some divisions, especially New Army formations, had to undergo significant reconstruction after several of its battalions had been disbanded or amalgamated. For example, the 34th Division was ordered to disband the 20th, 21st, 24th/27th and 26th Northumberland Fusiliers in the 102nd and 103rd Brigades. This led to a restructuring of all three brigades and the arrival of the 1st East Lancashire Regiment, which had been transferred across from 4th Division. Whilst some divisions managed to escape with minimal disruption, the large amount of upheaval experienced by many was detrimental to the performance of the infantry during the German Spring Offensive in March 1918.⁸⁹⁹

The only aspect of this process that remains relatively unknown is how battalions were selected. Simon Justice claims GHQ selected 71 battalions, whilst the remainder were selected by divisional commanders.⁹⁰⁰ Unfortunately, no list has survived explaining the choice and reasoning behind which units were selected, which leaves it open to interpretation. Timothy Bowman's analysis of reductions in Irish Regiments provides the best explanation, as he considers a multitude of factors. Based upon the private papers of GOC 36th (Ulster) Division, Major-General Oliver Nugent, Bowman argues that local politics and regional sensibilities influenced the selection of units in the division, as well as the disciplinary record and perceived combat effectiveness of each unit. Though harder to determine for the

⁸⁹⁸ TNA, WO32/18591, Memorandum on reorganisation, 31st January 1918; French, Craig F., 'The 51st (Highland) Division During the First World War' (University of Glasgow PhD Thesis, 2006), pp. 133-134.

⁸⁹⁹ TNA, WO95/2436, 34th Division's monthly narrative, February 1918; Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. I*, p. 54; Justice, 'Vanishing Battalions', pp. 170-172; Perry, *Commonwealth Armies*, pp. 28-29.

⁹⁰⁰ Justice, 'Vanishing Battalions', p. 160.

16th (Irish) Division, Bowman claims that disciplinary records were also prevalent, as well as any suspected political infiltration of 'Sinn Feiners' within each unit. There is also evidence that the lineage of service battalions in the 16th (Irish) Division may have influenced this. For instance, the 7th (South Irish Horse) Royal Irish Regiment was retained whilst the 6th Royal Irish Regiment was disbanded. Whilst the junior battalion survived, as it was only formed in September 1917 from the South Irish Horse, its status as part of the SR, and thus the regular army, gave it precedence under War Office orders.⁹⁰¹ Though insightful, it is impossible to determine the exact reasoning behind which battalions were disbanded, especially when it was influenced by choices made by GHQ and divisional commanders.

The problems this caused were exacerbated by the decision to extend the British line. The French Commander-in-Chief, General Phillippe Pétain, urged Haig in October 1917 to take over a greater amount of line, so he could create a reserve of 40 divisions for upcoming defensive operations. Though Haig initially refused, the War Cabinet forced him to acquiesce and, in February 1918, extended his line from 95 to 123 miles. Though pressing due to the abysmal state of French manpower in early 1918, with infantry divisions holding proportionally more of the line than their British counterparts, the decision overextended the diminished BEF. The War Cabinet was therefore responsible for weakening the BEF at a critical moment, as it spread its most scarce and valuable resource, manpower, thinly across the Western Front.⁹⁰²

This was almost compounded by the Supreme War Council's decision to create a general reserve.⁹⁰³ Created in November 1917 to coordinate military planning, provide strategic advice, and maintain oversight of events, it decided to create an Allied general reserve under the command of an executive committee in January 1918. Though it had the power to determine the contribution of each national army, as well as the authority to decide where it was employed, it effectively became powerless after both Haig and Pétain refused to relinquish their few remaining reserves. Though Elizabeth Greenhalgh is right to argue that a general reserve was the only solution capable of responding to the German Spring offensive,

⁹⁰¹ Bowman, *Irish Regiments*, pp. 144-152.

⁹⁰² Greenhalgh, *The French Army and the First World War*, pp. 267-269; Harris, *Haig and the First World War*, pp. 432-433.

⁹⁰³ For an overview of the constitutional issues affecting this, see; TNA, WO32/10694, Memoranda on the general reserve by Army Council, February 1918.

it is not surprising that Haig and Pétain, increasingly worried about their respective reserves, vigorously opposed its creation.⁹⁰⁴

There were hopes that the arrival of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) could offset the battalions lost. As an 'American Army' would not become operational until late 1918 due to expansion difficulties and a lack of shipping, the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, had contacted American authorities in France regarding the use of American formations in the BEF. He forwarded a memorandum by the CIGS, Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson, in December 1917, which recommended the amalgamation of 100 American companies into British battalions. Though rejected by the American Commander-in-Chief, General John J. Pershing, both GHQ and the War Office continued to advocate the amalgamation of American forces into the BEF. On 28th December 1917, Haig supposedly recommended a programme of 'Americanising' British Divisions by replacing British battalions with their American counterparts. Initially, one battalion would be assigned to each division and, as more arrived, British formations would be replaced and subsequently broken up for drafts. Each division, as it 'Americanised', was to come under an American officer, with British staff at the divisional and Brigade level slowly replaced. Though receptive, Pershing refused to give a definitive answer to Haig and only agreed to employ battalions or regiments in the BEF if the situation became critical. This was followed by Robertson who, on 9th January, offered to increase the amount of shipping supplied to the United States of America by Britain, providing it was used to transport 150 American battalions overseas for use in British divisions. Both plans, as well as those presented by the French, were rejected by Pershing in late January, who gave a multitude of reasons, including national sentiment, for his refusal. Though accepted, these proposals demonstrate the anxiety felt within British political and military circles regarding the state of the BEF and the broader manpower crisis.⁹⁰⁵

⁹⁰⁴ Greenhalgh, Elizabeth, *Victory through Coalition: Britain and France during the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 172-173, 181-183 and 191.

⁹⁰⁵ Library of Congress, MSS35949, box 1, folder 3, General John J. Pershing diaries, Vol. 1, 28th December 1917 and 9th-30th January 1918, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/mss35949.00103/?sp=48andst=image> [last accessed 26/04/2022]; TNA, CAB23/4/69 and 81, 295th and 307th War Cabinet Meeting, 10th and 27th December 1917; TNA, CAB23/5/13, 15, 22 and 30, 222nd, 224th, 328th and 338th War Cabinet Meeting, 14th, 16th and 22nd January and 4th February 1918; Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. I*, pp. 62-64; Greenhalgh, *The French Army and the First World War*, p. 251; Pershing, John J., *My Experiences In the World War, Vol. I* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1931), pp. 225-227, 237-238, 239-241, 253, 260 and 269-274; Sheffield, Gary and Bourne,

The problems caused by restructuring were not a universal experience within the imperial army however, as the Canadian Corps were able to avoid it through effective manpower management. Whilst the belated introduction of conscription in Canada would sustain its forces, its impact, as mentioned in chapter four, was not felt until May 1918. Therefore, Canadian authorities decided to disband the (UK based) 5th Canadian Division in February 1918 to provide a temporary manpower buffer. Yet, both the War Cabinet and War Office, which had pushed the Ministry of OMFC to deploy the 5th Canadian Division in France since early 1917, attempted to overturn this. They proposed to reorganise all Canadian divisions, including the 5th, onto a nine battalion structure, so they could utilise the extra battalions to form a sixth division. Although the idea of six Canadian divisions across two corps (and the possibility of a Canadian Army) enticed the Minister of the OMFC, Sir Albert Edward Kemp, it was strongly rejected by GOC Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie. He argued the corps was at full strength and, with drafts from the 5th Canadian Division, he could expand supporting arms and each battalion by 100 men. This would increase the Corps' fighting strength, remove the need for additional staff officers and 'reduce [manpower] overheads'. This, combined with the manpower assessment by the Canadian Adjutant General, Major-General P. E. Thacker, in January 1918, which outlined the CEF would run out of reinforcements by May without additional drafts, led Kemp to accept Currie's plans. Collectively, this demonstrates that Canadian authorities had a much stronger grasp of manpower management, as they were willing to disband the 5th Canadian Division to expand and sustain the Canadian Corps. The War Office, however, were willing to ignore the immense problems of sustaining an enlarged Canadian Corps for the immediate (and probably short-lived) gain of two divisions. Not only would this have reduced the combat effectiveness of the Canadian Corps in both the short and long term, but it demonstrates a lack of foresight. Considering this was proposed at a time when the BEF was undergoing extensive reorganisation due to a lack of drafts, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the War Office

John (eds), *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters, 1914-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), pp. 364 and 372.

had great difficulty compared to its Dominion counterparts in managing its dwindling manpower assets.⁹⁰⁶

The reorganisation of the BEF was also accompanied by a substantial shift in the reinforcement system. Reinforcements, which had been processed, housed, and trained at IBDs, were progressively replaced by corps reinforcement camps and divisional wings between September 1917 and February 1918. Upon arrival at an IBD, reinforcements were now to be processed, assigned to a unit and forwarded onto their corresponding divisional wing, which were grouped together in a corps reinforcement camp. Whilst the movement of troops continued to be controlled by 3rd Echelon, corps and divisional authorities were in charge of administrative and training, respectively. The Officer Commanding (OC) corps reinforcement camp oversaw base administration and the movement of drafts, whilst divisional wings received, administered, and trained infantry reinforcements for their own divisions. A similar process was operated for supporting arms, which had specific depots at, or near, corps reinforcement camps. If a division was cycled into another formation, then its divisional wing would follow and relocate to its corresponding corps reinforcement camp.⁹⁰⁷ As a result of these changes, the number of IBDs were reduced to 13 and recategorized from A to M, as their sole purpose was to receive, process and prepare reinforcements for further travelling.⁹⁰⁸

Unlike previous reforms, these were designed to improve the training provided to infantry drafts. As chapter six will demonstrate, these changes had been developing under the Canadian Corps since 1916 and, due to their success, were implemented across the BEF. The divisional wing system did, however, increase the speed in which drafts were posted to frontline units. As mentioned, it took up to three weeks for an infantry draft to reach the frontline from the UK. The most time consuming aspect of this was the mandatory training

⁹⁰⁶ TNA, CAB23/1/40, 40th War Cabinet meeting, 22nd January 1917; CAB23/2/15, 97th War Cabinet meeting, 15th March 1917; TNA, CAB23/4/49, 275th War Cabinet meeting, 16th November 1917; Nicholson, G.W.L., *Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919: Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1962), pp. 231-232; Stewart, William, 'Frustrated Belligerence: The Unhappy History of the 5th Canadian Division in the First World War', *Canadian Military History*, 22:4 (2015), pp. 31-46.

⁹⁰⁷ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 5047, file 913, Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp war diary, September 1917; TNA, WO95/1056, Memorandum on Canadian reinforcements, 7th June 1918; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 222; Holt, Richard, *Filling the Ranks: Manpower in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), pp. 245-249.

⁹⁰⁸ Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 221 and 321.

courses that reinforcements had to undertake at the IBD, which reached a height of nine days in 1917. The transition to divisional wings, however, gave divisional commanders greater control over training and enabled them to balance the competing demands of proficiency and speed.⁹⁰⁹

Divisional wings also positioned reinforcements much closer to the frontline. Whilst difficulties on the Lines of Communication had been resolved in 1917, it could still take up to 48 hours for soldiers to arrive at the frontline. Nevertheless, divisional wings were housed at corps reinforcement camps and normally located at a railhead near to the frontline. For example, VII Corps Reinforcement Camp was roughly 2 miles north of Péronne, which was only six miles away from parts of the line held by the 9th, 16th (Irish) and 21st Divisions. It was connected to divisional fronts by light railway and, once orders from 3rd Echelon had arrived, men could be dispatched to the frontline.⁹¹⁰ Though limited by the number of troops at each divisional wing, which itself had to be replenished via the Lines of Communication, GHQ had the flexibility to immediately respond to an emergency on any part of the frontline. The benefit this offered was evident at the end of the Third Battle of Ypres, when the Canadian Corps undertook successive operations near Passchendaele Ridge. During the Second Battle of Passchendaele on 26th October, casualty estimates were quickly drawn up and, within a couple of hours, reinforcements were on route from the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp. Reinforcements for the Canadian machine gun companies, however, broke all records by arriving on the same day the report was created. Thus, if corps reinforcement camps and divisional wings were positioned and used correctly, they could cut the time between sustaining casualties and receiving reinforcements to less than 24 hours.⁹¹¹

Though a significant improvement, especially if the BEF were undertaking offensive operations, the divisional wing system was not suited to a defensive strategy. The collapse of Russia in 1917 had allowed the German Army to transfer divisions across from the Eastern Front, which forced the Entente, exhausted by the Third Battle of Ypres and the French

⁹⁰⁹ For reinforcement training, see chapter six.

⁹¹⁰ TNA, WO95/521, VII Corps Reinforcement Camp's monthly narrative, March 1918; TNA, WO95/808, VII Corps operational report, 21st March 1918; TNA, WO95/1741, 9th Division war diary, March 1918; TNA, WO95/1956, 16th (Irish) Division war diary, March 1918; TNA, WO95/2133, 21st Division war diary, March 1918.

⁹¹¹ TNA, WO95/1055, Canadian Corps AQMG war diary, 31st October 1917.

Mutinies, to adopt a defensive stance until the AEF became operational.⁹¹² Therefore, the BEF adopted a new defensive strategy based on German tactics and created three interlocking zones, the forward, battle and rear. The forward zone acted as a 'trip wire' and was formed of interlocking garrisons and machine gun nests. It was designed to provide forward warning and hold up the offensive as men gradually withdrew into the Battle Zone, which was intended to halt any attack. Strong defensive positions extending 2,000 to 3,000 yards were held whilst armies and corps orchestrated large counter-attacks designed to push back any enemy incursion. The Rear Zone extended up to 8 miles behind and constituted limited defences in a similar manner to the forward Zone. Though sensible, the system was never fully understood by the BEF and there was little planning about how divisional wings, stationed in the Rear Zone, would fit into this. Presumably they, as well as reinforcements held in temporary entrenching battalions, would send drafts to frontline units once divisions had been withdrawn or given a 24 hour break from fighting. However, no thought had been dedicated to their role if the enemy broke through the Battle Zone and, due to their location, they were exposed to long-range enemy artillery.⁹¹³

Therefore, when the long-awaited German offensive materialised on 21st March 1918 against Fifth, and later Third, Army, the reinforcement system quickly crumbled. Firstly, casualty reporting, which had been finely tuned and extensively practiced by 'A' staff for offensive operations in trench warfare, broke down. Divisions on the frontline were immediately overrun by 76 German divisions, which had been supported by an overwhelming bombardment of 10,000 guns. Flung into disarray and forced into a rapid withdrawal that lasted until 28th March, Fifth Army had no means to ascertain casualty figures at the regimental level. Whilst GHQ estimated that the BEF had suffered an estimated 55,500 casualties by 23rd March, detailed casualty reports were impossible to create as corps struggled to maintain contact with their divisions, who continuously moved their headquarters without notice. As a result, no return was generated for several days and,

⁹¹² Watson, Alexander, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary at War, 1914-1918* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), pp. 515-518.

⁹¹³ Beckett, Bowman and Connolly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 351-352; Harris, *Haig and the First World War*, pp. 435, 437-442.

considering the severity of the fighting, an accurate report could not have been rendered until a division was rotated into reserve.⁹¹⁴

Secondly, the reinforcement system near the frontline collapsed as divisional wings were exposed to German forces. Indeed, once the first German offensive, codenamed Michael, began, long-range artillery had targeted the British Rear Zones and destroyed the light railway system, which prevented the rapid movement of drafts to the frontline. Though reinforcements could have moved by road, the precise location of divisions were unknown and, as mentioned in chapter four, battalions needed a definitive break from fighting to absorb fresh reinforcements.⁹¹⁵ Whilst some divisional wings were therefore withdrawn, the growing number of gaps emerging in the British line forced GHQ to use them as *ad hoc* units that could provide immediate support to threatened areas. For instance, the VII Corps Reinforcement Camp Commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel A. Hunt, was ordered to command an *ad hoc* formation of eight composite battalions, called 'Hunt's Force', on 23rd March. The 9th (Scottish), 16th (Irish), 21st and 39th Divisional Wings formed one battalion each, whilst the 17th and 24th Entrenching Battalions formed another two. The remainder were composed of a mixture of rearward units and groups, including details, instructors, and students from the VII Corps School of Instruction. They operated alongside VII Corps in Third Army until relieved on 27th March and, overall, lost an estimated 75 officers and 576 other ranks. Though, in theory, a poor use of reinforcements, as most were inexperienced and had to serve under officers they did not know, the situation was critical and there was no other practical use for these men until the front stabilised. Whilst useful, they defaulted on their main function as reserve units as they could not receive, train or draft reinforcements to the frontline throughout the entire period.⁹¹⁶

The Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General G. H. Fowke, acknowledged the breakdown in the reinforcement system and attempted to replenish the BEF through a careful rotation

⁹¹⁴ TNA, WO95/521, Fifth Army's narrative of German Spring Offensive, March 1918; Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 355-357; Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. I*, p. 216; Hall, Brian N., *Communications and British Operations on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 249; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 227.

⁹¹⁵ TNA, WO95/521, VII Corps Reinforcement Camp's narrative of German Spring Offensive.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid; TNA, WO95/277, Second Army war diary and narrative of operations, March-April 1918; Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. I*, pp. 347 and 501.

of divisions. Unlike his predecessor, Lieutenant-General Sir Nevil Macready, in 1914, Fowke had a much larger pool of divisions to draw upon and was able to tap a broader, though finite, manpower pool in the UK. He asked the War Office to return all men, estimated at 88,000, on leave in the UK, along with all trained and partially-trained reinforcements, which would be used to create a large manpower reserve at British bases. Combined with an internal comb out of 'A' men in convalescent and rest camps, as well as 'B' graded reinforcements held on standby for possible use, Fowke planned to replenish all divisions leaving the line, up to a strength of 800 men per battalion. To facilitate this, GHQ economised manpower across the frontline and, between 21st and 28th March, transferred 18 divisions south from the First and Second Armies to relieve depleted formations in the Third and Fifth Armies.⁹¹⁷

Though logical, the severity and longevity of the German offensive made this impossible. From 23rd March, gaps in the Third and Fifth Armies' line emerged due to mounting casualties and uncoordinated withdrawals, which threatened the major logistical hub of Amiens and the British link with the French Army further south. To avoid collapse, GOC Third and Fifth Armies, General Sir Julian Byng and Lieutenant-General Hubert Gough respectively, had to commit the fresh divisions they received to the growing gaps emerging along their line. As a result, divisions were retained on the frontline, or near to it in reserve, after it became evident that their strength had reached critical proportions. For instance, the 16th (Irish) Division had lost an estimated 5,543 men across its infantry, pioneer and machine gun battalions between 21st and 23rd March, which had forced each brigade to become a composite battalion. Although the division was relieved by the 39th Division and rotated into reserve on 23rd March, it had less than 24 hours rest before it was needed again. After reorganising its composite formations back into individual battalions of 150 to 200 rifles each, the division was ordered to defend the crossings over the Somme at Froissy, Méricourt and Cerisy. The next day, it was transferred to XIX Corps and used until 3rd April to protect the approach to Amiens. Whilst successful, the 16th (Irish) Division desperately needed

⁹¹⁷ TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 23rd-31st March 1918; TNA, WO95/176, First Army's narrative of operations, March-April 1918; TNA, WO95/277, Second Army's narrative of operations, March-April 1918; Edmonds, J. E., *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. II* (London: Macmillan, 1937), p. 106.

reinforcements, as on 28th March, it could only retain its cohesion as a fighting unit by amalgamating, for the second time in a week, into a composite brigade.⁹¹⁸

Though pushing the BEF to the brink of collapse, its situation was even worse during Operation Georgette, fought between 9th and 18th April, for two reasons. Firstly, divisions were substantially weaker, in numbers and proficiency, than they had been on 21st March 1918. During Operation Michael, the BEF had lost 160,000 men and divisions needed time to rebuild. Whilst some, such as the 14th (Light) and 18th (Eastern) Divisions, were slowly replenished as they held the line near Amiens, 16 divisions were transferred north to a 'quiet part' of the line in First and Second Armies for immediate reconstitution under Fowke's plan.⁹¹⁹ Upon arrival, formations had to be reorganised, re-equipped, and rapidly built up in strength. For example, the 6th Division arrived at Second Army on 26th March and had, by 9th April, received 3,329 reinforcements. During this time, it was reorganised and, bar stoke mortars, fully re-equipped with machine guns and other essential fighting equipment.⁹²⁰ Divisions, though numerically stronger, were in a state of flux. Most had lost a large proportion of their experienced officers and other ranks in recent fighting and, as a result, were largely composed of partially-trained reinforcements. Whilst the return of stragglers and wounded veterans helped to alleviate the deficit of experience, battalions were unable to integrate their reinforcements through training before the next phase of German operations began.⁹²¹ Therefore, the BEF was precariously weak when Operation Georgette commenced on 9th April in the Lys Valley, as a large minority of divisions in First and Second Armies were substantially reduced in fighting power.

⁹¹⁸ TNA, WO95/521, Fifth Army's narrative of German Spring offensive, 21st-29th March 1918; TNA, WO95/1956, 16th (Irish) Division's narrative of operations, 21st March - 3rd April 1918; TNA, WO95/1957, 16th (Irish) Division AQMG war diary, March 1918; Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 357; Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. I*, pp. 413, 463, 469 and 505; Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. II*, pp. 19, 23-25 and 50; Terence, Denman, *Ireland's Unknown soldiers: the 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992), pp. 167-168..

⁹¹⁹ TNA, WO95/176, First Army's narrative of operations, March-April 1918; Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. II*, pp. 123, 139-140.

⁹²⁰ TNA, WO95/283, Second Army AQMG war diary, 1st April 1918; TNA, WO95/1587, 6th Division AQMG war diary, 26th March - 9th April 1918.

⁹²¹ TNA, WO95/277, Second Army war diary and narrative of operations, March-April 1918; French, 'The 51st (Highland) Division During the First World War', p. 79.

This was exacerbated by the fact that GHQ had few fresh divisions on hand to reinforce First and Second Armies. Though the BEF was able to resist and implement a coordinated withdrawal, divisions were rapidly losing strength and could not be relieved, as the majority of divisions in Third and Fourth (previously Fifth) Armies were low in strength from fighting the previous month. Therefore, Haig, whose mental state had become increasingly stressed due to the fear that the BEF had reached its breaking point, was forced to rotate divisions north that, under normal circumstances, would have received extended periods of rest. Whilst the fresh 33rd Division was transferred to Second Army, the level of desperation felt at GHQ is evident by the despatch of the 39th Division on 11th April, which was so weak it had to be formed into a composite brigade of five battalions.⁹²²

Though weariness, which had been caused by high casualties, poor logistics and continuous fighting across difficult terrain, had undermined the German Army's ability to maximise their advantage over the BEF, the latter required French assistance to stabilise its front. Despite contemporary criticism that the French did little to assist the BEF, the French Commander-in-Chief, General Phillippe Pétain, quickly mobilised his Reserve Army Group (French First and Third Armies) on 22nd March and took command of the British line up to Péronne. He committed 32 divisions to British sectors during Operation Michael, and another 12 during the course of Operation Georgette. It is clear, therefore, that French assistance was vital for stopping the BEF from collapsing in the spring of 1918.⁹²³

Though three more German offensives, codenamed Blucher-Yorck, Gneisenau and Marne-Reims, were launched against the French Army in May, June, and July respectively, they quickly petered out against staunch Entente resistance. Whilst this gave the BEF much needed time to recuperate and recover, the German Spring Offensive had two substantial impacts. Firstly, it exposed weaknesses in the newly created divisional wing structure. Units were too close to the frontline to safely supply reinforcements and due to the severity of the

⁹²² WO95/176, First Army's narrative of operations, March-April 1918; TNA, WO95/277, Second Army war diary and narrative of operations, March-April 1918; Becke, A. F., *Order of Battle of Divisions, Part 3B: New Army Divisions (30-41) and 63rd (R.N.) Division* (London: HMSO, 1939), p. 93; Harris, *Haig and the First World War*, pp. 468-471.

⁹²³ Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 358; Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. II*, p. 489; Greenhalgh, *The French Army and the First World War*, pp. 272-282; Greenhalgh, *Victory through Coalition*, p. 193.

situation, were forced to relegate their training and drafting role by becoming *ad hoc* battalions. The Canadian Corps, who were not directly threatened by the German offensive, responded to this problem by moving its corps reinforcement camp and divisional wings onto the Lines of Communication, which could continue to train and draft reinforcements via advance staging areas. Though Fowke could have followed a similar pattern, he understood that the BEF had an insufficient amount of manpower to rebuild divisions, nor the time to extensively train them beforehand. Therefore, he disbanded all British corps reinforcement camps and divisional wings by 15th June and reverted to a simplified system based upon IBDs. Rather than a return to regimental reinforcement pools, reinforcements were processed by IBDs and forwarded onto two training camps located near British bases. They were provided with remedial training and, afterwards, sent to reception camps at the corps and divisional level. These were located at a central railhead and reinforcements were held until their unit could safely absorb them. This alteration, though unsophisticated, produced a simple reinforcement procedure and system that processed drafts in a quick but secure manner.⁹²⁴

The German Spring Offensive had also precipitated an irreversible drafting crisis that plunged the BEF into terminal decline. Special drafting measures in the UK had, as discussed in chapter three, enabled the dispatch of 340,378 reinforcements between 21st March and 30th April. Yet, the BEF could not recover, as drafts, though sufficient to cover the estimated 236,300 casualties sustained, had drained manpower reserves in the UK and led to a reduced output for the next several months, estimated at 93,000 between May and August 1918. Whilst the establishment of each battalion had been reduced to 900 other ranks and additional reinforcements had arrived in, or were on route to, France in April, including the 52nd (Lowland) and 74th (Yeomanry) Divisions from Palestine, the liability of the BEF had increased as its manpower assets plummeted. It was these predictions, therefore, that led Haig to reduce nine depleted divisions to cadres which, on 20th April, included the 14th (Light), 16th (Irish), 30th, 31st, 34th, 39th, 40th, 59th (2nd North Midland) and 66th (2nd East Lancashire) Divisions.⁹²⁵ Most service and second line Territorial battalions were reduced to training staffs

⁹²⁴ TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 25th May and 15th June 1918; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 248-249.

⁹²⁵ TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 20th-28th April and 9th May 1918; TNA, WO106/411, Memorandum from Head of Staff Duties Section, Major-general Guy Dawney, to all armies, 14th June 1918; TNA, WO106/431, Letter from Haig to Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, General Ferdinand Foch, 12th

and all surplus personnel were sent to IBDs for drafting. Regular and first line Territorials were retained, but only survived by cannibalising junior battalions in other divisions. The latter took the place of their regular counterparts and followed the same pattern as outlined above. Even this, however, could not save all regular units and, similar to the 1st and 2nd Connaught Rangers' experience in 1914, the regular battalions of the Royal Munster Fusiliers and Royal Dublin Fusiliers were amalgamated due to a lack of reinforcements.⁹²⁶

This was exacerbated by the opening of Operation Blücher near the Aisne River in late May. As part of a broader scheme of *roulement*, IX Corps, composed of the depleted 8th, 21st, 25th, and 50th (Northumberland) Divisions, were sent to a quiet part of the French line in April, so it could relieve four fresh French divisions for use in a general reserve. Though recovering, they were hit by an intense bombardment and immediately overrun by German assault divisions, which led to a desperate withdrawal. By 4th June, IX Corps, as well as the 19th (Western) Division sent to reinforce it, had suffered 28,703 casualties, and were effectively reduced to cadres through wastage.⁹²⁷

Overall, Haig's original decision to revert nine divisions to cadres was logical when considering the dire manpower situation, as it substantially reduced the annual number of reinforcements needed by the BEF.⁹²⁸ Throughout May and June however, the French government and military, including the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, General Ferdinand Foch, fiercely resisted the reduction of British divisions. Initially appointed on 26th March 1918 to coordinate the Entente's operational response to the German offensive, Foch's role was expanded to strategic direction at the Beauvais Conference on 3rd April 1918. In this new position, he proposed to counter any new German offensive through *roulement*, which, as noted above, required depleted British divisions to relieve fresh French divisions for use in a general reserve. Yet, by reducing nine and, subsequently, 13 divisions to cadres, GHQ risked the premise of *roulement*, as it needed a minimum of 156

May 1918; TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office; Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. II*, pp. 301, 488-493.

⁹²⁶ For greater detail on battalion amalgamations and reductions, as well as their movement between divisions, see; TNA, WO106/427, Chart on reorganisation and amalgamation of divisions and battalions, 25th May 1918.

⁹²⁷ Edmonds, *Military operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. III* (London: Macmillan, 1939), p. 159; Greenhalgh, *Foch in Command*, pp. 343-344; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Army*, p. 247.

⁹²⁸ TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office.

divisions to function. As a result, Foch, 'looked on this... as one of the most important questions, if not the most important question, of the moment', and suggested to Haig numerous methods of procuring manpower. Haig, however, rejected all of Foch's proposals, claiming they would generate an insufficient amount of manpower to restore these divisions, which were only 3,500 strong before reduction. As a result, they were 'useless' for *roulement* and the 30,000 men gained through disbandment were, in addition to monthly drafts, vital for maintaining the BEF at its reduced size.⁹²⁹

Foch, however, was convinced that there was an enormous supply of trained manpower in the UK and, after communicating with Haig, believed he could reconstitute divisions if he received adequate drafts. Therefore, Foch attempted on 16th May to persuade Haig to apply pressure onto the War Office for additional reinforcements. This seemingly worked, as Haig accepted Foch's argument, 'that, out of the 1,400,000 men wearing Khaki in England, 100,000 could be obtained to fill out nine divisions sufficiently to hold a quiet part of the front'. Whether in agreement or seeing this as an opportunity to extract additional drafts from the War Cabinet, Haig informed the War Office that he supported the reconstitution of divisions with 'B' graded soldiers from the home army. Although the new CIGS, General Sir Henry Wilson, was opposed to such a decision, as he feared the impact this would have on the BEF, Cabinet approval was given the same day, with 85,000 'A' and 'B' category soldiers made available for active service.⁹³⁰

Despite some disagreement over the precise make up of these formations, with Haig suddenly reluctant to make up divisions with 60,000 'B' graded soldiers, he informed Foch on 10th June that the BEF would field, 44 'front line' and five 'second line' divisions, as well as two cadres. The 8th, 19th (Western) and 21st Divisions were to be withdrawn and reconstituted with 'A' grade drafts from the UK, whilst the 30th, 34th and 50th (Northumbrian) Divisions were to be formed of battalions from Palestine and Salonika. The 8th and 21st Divisions were to be immediately refilled, whilst the remainder were to be made up as soon as drafts or units

⁹²⁹ TNA, CAB23/17, 'X series' Cabinet Meetings, 16th May 1918; TNA, WO106/410, Letter from Lieutenant-General John Philip Du Cane to Wilson, 9th May 1918; TNA, WO106/431, Letter from Haig to Foch, 12th May 1918; Greenhalgh, *Foch in Command*, pp. 309-310 and 343-346.

⁹³⁰ TNA, CAB23/6/36, 414th War Cabinet meeting, 22nd May 1918; TNA, WO106/410, Letter from Du Cane to Wilson, 14th May 1918 and Haig to Foch, 10th June 1918; Greenhalgh, *Foch in Command*, pp. 345-346; Sheffield and Bourne, *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters*, p. 362.

arrived from overseas. The 40th and 59th (2nd North Midland) Divisions had already been reconstituted as 'second line' formations by early June, as these 'B' graded battalions had begun forming in the UK during the March crisis. Conversely, the 14th (Light), 16th (Irish) and 25th Divisions were withdrawn to the UK and reconstituted with 'B' personnel, with the former two returning to France in July. The latter, though arriving in England, could not be reconstituted due to a shortage of 'B' recruits in the UK. Therefore, it returned to France in September and received nine 'A' battalions from the 7th, 23rd and 48th (North Midland) Divisions in Italy, which had avoided the restructuring of the BEF in January 1918. The 39th and 66th (2nd East Lancashire) Divisions were retained as cadres and were used to instruct the five American divisions allocated to the British front. The 66th (2nd East Lancashire) Division, however, was belatedly reconstituted in September from the South African Brigade and battalions from other theatres.⁹³¹

Therefore, GHQ and the War Office, under pressure from Foch to alter its manpower and reinforcement policies, reconstituted 13 of its 14 divisional cadres by September 1918. Wilson even approached the Canadian Government about reorganising the Canadian Corps into five smaller divisions, despite their rejection of this plan in January. Though initially critical of Foch's strategy, Wilson eventually accepted that the reconstitution of divisions was essential, as it kept, "*roulement*" going on which the whole machinery of the battle depends.'⁹³² This commitment, however, posed a severe risk to the BEF, as the increase in divisions, as well as the Entente's shift to offensive operations, would drain the last remnants of available manpower. Haig was aware of the implications and informed the War Office in mid-June that, based on recent manpower projections, only 29 British divisions could be sustained from Autumn. His plans were astute and, contrary to Tim Travers' argument that Haig was a 'traditionalist' who spurned new technology, proposed to substitute manpower with firepower and mechanisation. The number of RFA brigades, though decreasing from 170 to 156, would be increased at the divisional level from two to four. Machine gun battalions and Royal Engineer companies would follow a similar pattern, whilst the Tank Corps would be

⁹³¹ TNA, CAB23/17, 'X series' Cabinet Meetings, 10th June 1918; TNA, WO106/409, Reports on reconstitution of 14th (Light), 16th (Irish) and 25th Divisions, June-September 1918; Becke, A. F., *Order of Battle of Divisions, Part 2B: 2nd Line Territorial Force Divisions (57th-69th) with The Home Service Divisions (71st-73rd) and 74th and 75th Divisions* (London: HMSO, 1937), pp. 70-71.

⁹³² TNA, WO106/43, Letter from Wilson to Canadian Minister of OMFC, Sir Edward Kemp, 12th June 1918.

increased from 12 unspecified battalions to 12 'heavy' and 10 'light' battalions across six brigades. Whilst it lacked the ambition encapsulated in Major-General J. F. C. Fuller's imaginative, but unrealistic, 'Plan 1919', which envisaged 6,438 tanks replacing the bulk of infantry, Haig's proposals were an intelligent response to the acute manpower crisis. Despite this, the War Office were initially hesitant to comment on the size of the BEF, as Foch was 'greatly opposed to any reductions' whilst operations were in progress. In August, however, they ordered one cavalry division to be disbanded and agreed to maintain 35 British Divisions in France and Italy from January 1919 for a minimum of three months.⁹³³

Both outlooks represented substantial reductions and raise the question of whether reconstituting these divisions was the correct decision, especially once offensive operations began. From a theoretical standpoint, it was prudent to reduce all 13 divisions in order to reduce total wastage and the need for additional reinforcements across all arms. The drafts used to reconstitute the 8th, 19th (Western) and 21st Divisions could have supported the BEF, whilst the battalions coming from overseas may have been broken up and used as experienced reinforcements. Both sources consisted of over 65,000 A class drafts and, in addition to the normal drafting allotment, could have sustained the reduced BEF over a longer period of time. Although the four 'Second Line' divisions could have been maintained through the use of 'B' graded personnel, the War Office had decided in May to draft the fittest proportion of them to 'First Line' Divisions. Though necessary, this decision had quickly drained the pool of available 'B' reinforcements and led to warnings in September that 'second line' divisions could not be maintained.⁹³⁴

The decision to reconstitute these divisions could not have been easily reversed, especially as it had been advocated by Foch. Therefore, both GHQ and the War Office knew

⁹³³ TNA, WO106/411, Correspondence between Haig and War Office, June-October 1918; Harris, J. P., *Men, Ideas, and Tanks: British military thought and armoured forces, 1903-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 165-172; Marble, Sanders, *British Artillery on the Western Front in the First World War: 'The Infantry cannot do with a gun less'* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 167; Palazzo, Albert, 'Plan 1919 – The Other One', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 77:309 (1999), pp. 39-42; Searle, Alaric (ed.), *The Military Papers and Correspondence of Major-General J F C Fuller (1916-1933)* (Stroud: The History Press for the Army Records society, 2017), pp. 110-125; Travers, Tim, 'Could the Tanks of 1918 Have Been War-Winners for the British Expeditionary Force?', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 27:3 (1992), pp. 389-391 and 395; Travers, Tim, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900-1918* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), pp. 72-76.

⁹³⁴ TNA, WO106/409, Letter from GHQ to War Office, 4th September 1918; TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office.

they would need to participate in some form of campaigning throughout the summer of 1918 before any reductions could be enacted. Secondly, the German Army had been substantially weakened by their earlier offensives. Between March and July, losses numbered 977,555 and were primarily concentrated in elite units that had led each assault. Combined with the start of the Spanish influenza, which had a greater effect on the underfed German forces, the manpower balance had swung in favour of the Entente. Despite the BEF's precarious state, the continued arrival of American forces gave the Entente a numerical advantage in men and divisions. These disadvantages were compounded for the German Army by several factors. German morale had plummeted after the failure to win a quick victory in March and April, which undermined their combat motivation. The Entente also enjoyed a considerable advantage in material, whilst the German Army had, as a result of the failed offensives, left their sophisticated fortifications to hold undeveloped trench lines that extended their front by 75 miles.⁹³⁵

Although the full extent of these factors was not fully known to any Allied commander at the end of July, both Foch and Haig were keen to push the advantage they had gained over the enemy through offensive operations. Therefore, the reconstitution of 13 divisions and their commitment to battle, as well as the remainder of the BEF and depleted French Army, represented a calculated risk by Foch and, to a certain extent, Haig. Both knew this would diminish the future strength of both armies but committed them to a series of counter-offensives that would capitalise on what Foch described as the Entente's 'moral and material ascendancy'. The long term fall out, though serious, was justifiable due to the potential impact on the German Army and the knowledge that the AEF would continue to grow and become more experienced.⁹³⁶

Whilst the French successfully prosecuted their counter-attack at the Battle of Soissons in July, the BEF prepared for a series of operations conducted by First, Second, Third and Fourth Armies. The latter, under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Rawlinson, planned a surprise, combined-arms operation east of Amiens that used the BEF's two strongest forces, the Australian and Canadian Corps, to secure the city and push towards

⁹³⁵Beckett, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, p. 361; Harris, *Haig and the First World War*, p. 485; Watson, *Ring of Steel*, pp. 524-525

⁹³⁶Greenhalgh, *Foch in Command*, pp. 407-412.

the Chaulnes-Roye line. Fought on 8th August, the Battle of Amiens achieved considerable success by using a combination of aircraft, artillery and tanks to quickly overrun enemy defences. This, as well as subsequent offensives, including the breach of the Hindenburg Line at St. Quentin Canal on 29th September, has led many historians to assess the One Hundred Days Offensive from a tactical and operational perspective.⁹³⁷

By focusing on the so-called peak of the learning curve, most historians have ignored the severe strain placed on the BEF until the armistice in November 1918. Soldiers were pushed to the limits of their endurance as most divisions could not be rotated into reserve for rest. Unlike previous engagements, all five British Armies were involved in successive offensives that only halted for operational pauses. Though the operational tempo slowed after September and became irregular between October and November, there was no quiet part of the line that divisions could be sent for rest and replenishment. As a result, there were very few 'fresh' divisions available to replace those that were deemed tired or depleted, as all were needed to sustain offensive operations, whether it was set-piece, exploitation, or pursuit. When Rawlinson requested the 6th Division from GHQ Reserve for operations in early September, Haig rejected his demand as he wished to keep a handful of divisions available for when the broader Entente offensive began on 26th September.⁹³⁸

Though corps attempted to internally shuffle their divisions to provide them with respite, they spent far more time in the line compared to previous campaigns.⁹³⁹ These difficulties were intensified by the shift towards semi-mobile warfare, after the German Army had been pushed beyond the Hindenburg Line in October. As a result, divisional relief became less frequent and more challenging, as divisions pursued the enemy and moved away from its established road and rail networks. For example, the 58th (2/1st London) Division had three major stints of service in August and September, serving 12 and 24 days respectively, whilst the 12th (Eastern) Division spent over half of September and four-fifths of October in the line.

⁹³⁷ Becket, Bowman and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, pp. 362-375.

⁹³⁸ TNA, WO95/277 Second Army war diary, August-November 1918; TNA, WO95/437 Fourth Army war diary, August-November 1918; TNA, WO95/522, Fifth Army war diary, August-November 1918; Boff, Jonathan, *Winning and Losing on the Western Front: The British Army and the defeat of Germany in 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 38; Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918*, Vol. V, p. 573; Sheffield and Bourne, *Douglas Haig: Diaries and Letters*, p. 402.

⁹³⁹ Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, p. 268.

Both had few opportunities to rest and were in near-continuous action from August, which increased wastage and imposed a heavy strain on the troops.⁹⁴⁰ Infantry and cavalry casualties numbered 298,155 during the campaign and led to a sharp decline in divisional strength.⁹⁴¹ The 74th (Yeomanry) Division suffered 2,970 casualties in September and saw its infantry strength decline 20 percent from 9,256 to 7,311. The trench strength of battalions in the 37th Division had dropped to less than 500 throughout the campaign, whilst the Guards Division believed no more than 400 soldiers per unit could be put into the line at any one time.⁹⁴²

This problem was exacerbated by the difficulty of integrating reinforcements with their frontline battalions. With very little time out of the line, it was impossible to wait for a unit to rotate into reserve before they were reinforced. Therefore, similar to 1914, reinforcements were brought up to divisions serving on the frontline. As noted, this was disadvantageous to the internal cohesion and tactical performance of battalions, which needed training to effectively integrate reinforcements. Some divisional commanders recognised this and attempted to diminish the impact through the organisation of their brigades. For instance, the 34th Division established a rotation system that, when able, held its frontline with one brigade. One would be held in support and another in the rear area for rest and training, with battalions spending nine days in each position. If a two brigade front was required, battalions spent at least one third of their time in the rear. Whilst the latter was more common, GOC 34th Division, Major-General C. L. Nicholson, regularly switched to the former during operational pauses or pursuits, when only patrols or small mobile forces were needed to maintain contact with the enemy. As mentioned in chapter four, he had advocated the importance of rest and training between engagements to maintain the combat effectiveness of battalions. Therefore, he and other divisional commanders, such as GOC 58th (2/1st London) Division, Major-General F. W. Ramsay, who had adopted this system, did all

⁹⁴⁰ TNA, WO95/2991, 58th (2/1st London) Division war diary, August-November 1918; Simkins, Peter, *From The Somme to Victory: The British Army's experience on the Western Front, 1916-1918* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2014), p. 188.

⁹⁴¹ Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918, Vol. V*, p. 562.

⁹⁴² TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, September 1918; TNA, WO95/3148, 74th (Yeomanry) Division's narrative of operations 2nd-28th September; Boff, *Winning and Losing on the Western Front*, p. 43.

they could to maximise the time their formations spent resting, training, and integrating reinforcements, even when their division spent long spells on the frontline.⁹⁴³

Though the BEF endured these hardships, the potential culmination of these effects is evident when evaluating the breakdown in discipline and near-mutinous state of the Australian Corps by October 1918. Australian soldiers have often been characterised in populist interpretations as ill-disciplined, in part due to their supposed 'national identity' that disregarded authority. Whilst this has been supported by contemporary accounts and some academic historians, who have pointed out their apparent role at the Étaples Mutiny in September 1917, there is little evidence to suggest this factor influenced operations in 1918. As will be outlined in chapter six, Australian soldiers were not stationed at Étaples during the alleged mutiny and, 'the 'combat refusals' suffered... in autumn 1918 were very different in nature.' Nor is there any sign that the morale and discipline of reinforcements was influenced by the French Mutinies, which saw varying incidents of collective indiscipline across a minimum of 54 French divisions in May and June 1917. Information regarding this was extremely limited and even the War Cabinet were unaware of its full extent.⁹⁴⁴

Instead, the breakdown in discipline can be pinned to the dwindling strength of Australian units and men who had been pushed beyond the limits of their endurance. Unlike Britain, Australia had not passed its own conscription act, as it failed to pass either of the referenda it held on this question in 1916 and 1917. Though this led to recruitment plummeting in 1918, neither the Australian government, nor GOC AIF, Lieutenant-General Sir William Birdwood, were willing to decrease the size of the Australian Corps. Whilst one division was temporarily designated a 'depot division' and kept in the rear, this was dropped during the German Spring Offensive. Despite significant losses, only three units, the 36th, 47th and 52nd Australian Battalions, were disbanded in May 1918 and, without any intervention

⁹⁴³ TNA, WO95/2436, 34th Division war diary, August-November 1918; TNA, WO95/2991, 58th (2/1st London) Division's narrative of operations, 16th October – 11th November 1918.

⁹⁴⁴ TNA, WO95/4027, Étaples Base war diary, May 1917; Blair, Dale, *Dinkum Diggers: An Australian Battalion at War* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), pp. 2-5; French, David, 'Who Knew What and When? The French Army Mutinies and the British Decision to Launch the Third Battle of Ypres', in Freedman, Lawrence, Hayes, Paul and O'Neill, Robert (eds), *War, Strategy and International Politics: Essays in Honour of Sir Michael Howard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 133-153; Greenhalgh, *The French Army and the First World War*, p. 201; Gill, Douglas and Dallas, Gloden, 'Mutiny at Étaples Base in 1917', *Past and Present*, 69 (1975), pp. 99-101; Sheffield, Gary, *Forgotten Victory: The First World War Myths and Realities* (London: Headline Publishing, 2002), p. 156.

from senior military or political figures, the Australian Corps continued fighting until October. The average strength of divisions throughout this period had dropped 39 percent from 13,145 to 8,017 all ranks between March and October, whilst some battalions, such as those in the 5th Australian Brigade, had fallen to a low of 330 by the end of August. Monash, though an excellent operational commander, rarely visited frontline units and was out of touch with reality on the ground. He continuously pushed his formations forward from August to September, and even refused an offer from GOC Fourth Army, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Rawlinson, to withdraw the Australian Corps from the frontline for a period of rest. Therefore, understrength battalions continued to assault, which placed excessive strain on those that survived. By late September, troops had been pushed past the limits of their endurance and morale plummeted; there was a sharp rise in disciplinary and sickness rates across all units and, on 21st September, 'D' company of the 1st Australian Battalion mutinied by refusing to attack. Even then, Monash continued to push his corps until early October, when the Australian Prime Minister, William Hughes, intervened with British authorities and threatened to sack Monash if he refused to withdraw the corps. As Christopher Pugsley argues, 'the gradual attrition of under-strength battalions was as destructive in success as it was in failure,' and Monash's inability to recognise this led to the Australian Corps becoming a 'spent force verging on total collapse'.⁹⁴⁵ Though the BEF avoided such lows in 1918, it demonstrates the magnitude of the risk taken in June by Haig and Foch.

Throughout 1918, GHQ struggled to contend with the cost of attrition. Despite their efforts to offset the acute manpower crisis, the German Spring Offensive had plunged the BEF into terminal decline. Whilst the War Cabinet, War Office and Haig attempted, with some success, to find untapped sources of manpower to draw upon, it was the sophisticated medical system that had enabled the BEF to continue fighting. Estimated to provide, at an absolute minimum, nearly one quarter of all drafts throughout the war, it created a consistent stream of reinforcements that mitigated the worst effects of attrition. It staved off collapse

⁹⁴⁵ TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, March and October 1918; Blair, *Dinkum Diggers*, pp. 157-161 and 163; Bou, Jean and Dennis, Peter, *The Australian Imperial Force*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 23 and 61-62; Jeffrey, Keith (ed.), *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, 1918-1922* (London: The Bodley Head for the Army Records Society, 1985), pp. 58-59; Pugsley, Christopher, *The Anzac Experience: New Zealand, Australia and Empire in the First World War* (Auckland: Raupo Publishing, 2001), pp. 272-277.

and allowed the BEF to retain a proportion of its cohesion, skill, and professionalism from 1916, as these men were trained veterans with battlefield experience. Whilst it was the most successful, and underrated, part of the reinforcement system, the decision to reconstitute 13 divisions from May 1918 was vital for winning the war, as it enabled the BEF to capitalise on the Entente's 'moral and material ascendancy' over the depleted German Army, whose losses had left it in a perilous state. This was not without danger, however, as the lack of reinforcements and reserves, combined with the near-continuous service of divisions from August 1918, was a considerable danger in the long term, as it could have destabilised the BEF in the same manner as the Australian Corps. Whilst the calculated risk paid dividends, it was Foch, and not Haig, who correctly gauged this. He overcome resistance at both GHQ and the War Office to implement his strategy and exerted an unparalleled influence on British reinforcement policy in 1918.

Chapter Six

Reinforcement Training on the Western Front, 1914-1918

One problem that was never anticipated by pre-war military planners was the need to train reinforcements within an active combat theatre. Whilst the various reserve systems in the UK were responsible for training drafts, the rapid expansion of British armed forces ensured reserve formations were unable to provide a continuous stream of well-trained reinforcements. GHQ considered this a serious problem by the end of 1914, once the pool of British reservists and Special Reservists had been depleted. Yet, the broader historiography has neglected how GHQ responded to the challenge of training drafts and, instead, focused upon the broader concepts of training and the so-called 'learning curve'.⁹⁴⁶ This has often taken a top-down perspective that focuses on battlefield performance, official publication of training pamphlets, the creation of training schools and how commanders of formations, ranging from battalion to corps, took greater responsibility over this training process. Although Lewis Frederickson, Richard Holt and, to some extent, Alison Hine, have attempted to provide a more nuanced interpretation by discussing this in relation to drafting procedures for the AIF, CEF and BEF respectively, none tackle the question fully.⁹⁴⁷

⁹⁴⁶ Beach, Jim, 'Issued by the General Staff: Doctrine Writing at British GHQ, 1917-1918', *War in History*, 19:4 (2012), pp. 464-491; Beckett, Ian F. W., Bowman, Timothy and Connelly, Mark, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 207-388; Bechtold, Mike, 'Command, Leadership, and Doctrine on the Great War Battlefield: The Australians, British, and Canadian experience at the Battle of Arras, May 1917', *War and Society*, 32:2 (2013), pp. 116-137; Boff, Jonathan, 'Combined Arms during the Hundred Days Campaign, August-November 1918', *War in History*, 17:4 (2010), pp. 459-478; Boff, Jonathan, *Winning and Losing on the Western Front: The British Third Army and the defeat of Germany in 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 39-73; Brown, Ian Malcolm, 'Not Glamorous, But Effective: The Canadian Corps and the Set-Piece Attack, 1917-1918', *The Journal of Military History*, 58:3 (1994), pp. 421-444; Cook, Tim, *At the Sharp End: Canadian's Fighting the Great War, 1914-1916, Vol. I* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2007); Cook, Tim, *Shock Troops: Canadian's Fighting the Great War, 1917-1918, Vol. II* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2008); Fox, Aimée, *Learning to Fight: Military Innovation and Change in the British Army, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Griffith, Paddy, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front: The British Army's Art of Attack, 1916-18* (London: Yale University Press, 1994); Harris, Paul and Marble, Sanders, 'The 'Step-by-Step' Approach: British Military Thought and Operational Method on the Western Front, 1915-1917', *War in History*, 15:1 (2008), pp. 17-42; Rawling, Bill, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Sheffield, Gary and Todman, Dan (eds), *Command and Control on the Western Front: The British Army Experience 1914-1918* (Stroud: Spellmount 2004); Travers, Tim, *How the War Was Won: Command and Technology in the British Army on the Western Front, 1917-1918* (London: Routledge, 1992).

⁹⁴⁷ Frederickson, Lewis, 'The Development of Australian Infantry on the Western Front 1916-1918: An Imperial model of training, tactics and technology' (University of New South Wales PhD Thesis, 2015), pp. 100-123; Hine, Alison, *Refilling Haig's Armies: The Replacement of British Infantry Casualties on the Western Front, 1916-1919* (Warwick: Helion, 2018), pp. 189, 199-200, 221-222; Holt, Richard, *Filling the Ranks: Manpower in*

Thus, it is important to understand how GHQ responded to the problem of untrained and partially-trained reinforcements on the Western Front and attempted to create a training system that balanced speed with the need for proficient replacements. Whilst successful in streamlining all convalescents and drafts through a standardised test and train system by 1917, GHQ was attempting to resolve extensive training problems outside their control with minimal manpower and resources. Although the training system was a successful innovation that economised scarce resources in the imperial army, the conditions it created did contribute to the Étaples Mutiny of 1917. Overall, the system could only remedy the most evident problems in reinforcement training and, until major reforms took place in the UK reserve system, its impact was limited. Whilst the subsequent adoption of corps reinforcement camps and divisional wings in September 1917 was progressive, as it fully devolved and empowered divisions to train their own reinforcements, the decentralised organisation and culture of the BEF led to mixed levels of investment and success. This is evident when comparing it against the Australian Corps, Canadian Corps, and New Zealand Division that served alongside it. Although Douglas Delaney has demonstrated the need to see the Dominion forces as part of a broader imperial army that came under the control of imperial authorities, the CEF, AIF and NZEF adapted imperial policy or implemented their own to meet their national circumstances. Therefore, this chapter will compare the BEF against the CEF, with reference to the AIF and NZEF. When placed side by side, it becomes clear that the reinforcement training policies implemented by the Canadians Corps and New Zealand Division was far more successful than those in the BEF. The former's homogenous organisation and structure enabled its GOC, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie, to create and shape an effective reinforcement training system between 1917 and 1918.⁹⁴⁸

By late 1914, complaints regarding the training of drafts began to emerge and would continue to persist throughout the rest of the war. Predominantly, criticism focused upon the age, fitness, and expertise of replacements. The GOC IV Corps, Lieutenant-General Henry Rawlinson, complained to Lord Kitchener in November 1914 that over 1,000 reinforcements

the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918 (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), pp. 128-168.

⁹⁴⁸ Delaney, Douglas, *The Imperial Army Project: Britain and the Land Forces of the Dominions and India, 1902-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2017), pp. 95-97.

sent to 7th Division were aged between 40 and 50, consisting of time expired soldiers and reservists from Section D, who had completed their reserve period and re-engaged for a further four years. Likewise, complaints circulated around III Corps in February 1915 that drafts lacked *esprit de corps*, basic musketry training and trained specialists, such as machine gunners.⁹⁴⁹ Yet, GHQ could do little about the quality of training provided to drafts during the first six months of war. The high casualty rates, caused by continuous action from the Retreat from Mons in August to the end of the First Battle of Ypres in November, had dominated the first few months of war. Despite the rapid flow of personnel overseas, formations had dwindled and desperately needed manpower. III Corps was 7,200 below its establishment by early November and, at the regimental level, units operated at a fraction of their establishment. The 1st Royal Fusiliers, after successive action with the 3rd Division, had dwindled to a strength of just 168 all ranks.⁹⁵⁰ Thus, replenishment was prioritised and most of winter was spent gradually rebuilding units and solidifying their newly created defensive position.

Yet, with the prospect of further offensive action in the spring and a growing concern across the BEF about the quality of reinforcements, the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir John French, began a process of reform that created a reinforcement training system within the imperial army. Continued from the end of 1915 by his successor, General Sir Douglas Haig, GHQ attempted to mould the pre-existing reinforcement structure to provide training to drafts upon arrival. Initially, French attempted to do this through several *ad hoc* measures. In January 1915, he proposed to appoint a General Officer and staff to oversee training at each British base and, after 100 reinforcements for the 1/28th London Regiment (Artists Rifles) arrived with no musketry training in May, staff were empowered to retain soldiers at the base until they were deemed proficient.⁹⁵¹ It is not clear how this draft was discovered, but the unique position and traditions of the 1/28th London Regiment (Artists Rifles) possibly led to this. Although in operation since October 1914, the battalion had

⁹⁴⁹ TNA, PRO30/57/51/8-9, Letters from GOC IV Corps, Lieutenant-General Henry Rawlinson to Lord Kitchener, 1st and 14th December 1914; TNA, WO95/683, Memoranda on drafts by III Corps, January-February 1915.

⁹⁵⁰ TNA, WO95/596, I Corps AQMG war diary, 18th November 1914; TNA, WO95/683, III Corps AQMG war diary, 5th November 1914.

⁹⁵¹ TNA, WO95/3953, Telegram from Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir John French, to War Office, 31st January 1915; TNA, WO95/3956, IGC war diary, 18th May 1915.

become an OTC in April 1915 and was attached to GHQ at St. Omer. Renamed the 'GHQ School', it could, unlike Infantry Base Depots (IBDs), directly raise questions with GHQ over the quality of drafts they received from the 2/28th and 3/28th London Regiment (Artists Rifles). The 1/28th London Regiment (Artists Rifles) were also selective about who they trained as officers. Following its pre-war regimental tradition, which required all NCOs and officers to start as privates, most reinforcements had to undertake a stint of service in the ranks before they advanced onto officer training. As a result, it was easier to identify and report drafts that had poor training.⁹⁵² By August, this obligation had transformed into a formal responsibility to discover untrained reinforcements and to complete their training before being drafted to the front.⁹⁵³

Although seemingly progressive as, in theory, reinforcements could only reach the frontline once their training was deemed proficient, there were several problems with these alterations. Firstly, IBDs were designed to be a temporary reservoir of manpower. They received reinforcements requested from the UK and held them until ordered to the frontline. The time spent at depots varied and soldiers spent anywhere between a few hours to a couple of weeks at each base, dependent upon the situation at the front. Although impossible to determine, it was estimated in May 1915 that troops spent an average of four to five days at each base, during which they had to be equipped and processed through the administrative system.⁹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the movement of troops was independently controlled by 3rd Echelon and, in practice, IBDs were little more than 'forwarding agencies'. As a result, base commandants and their small staff had to create and implement, from scratch, a training system that identified poorly trained reinforcements and provided specialist instruction.

Unsurprisingly, the switch from a purely administrative function to one that also provided training was haphazard. Although the number of reinforcements classified as untrained was initially small, with 11 and 46 found at Rouen and Le Havre in May 1915

⁹⁵² May, H. A. R., *Memories of the Artists Rifles* (London: Howlett and son, 1929), pp. 148-157; Stagoll, Highman S., *The regimental roll of honour and war record of the Artists' Rifles (1/28th, 2/28th and 3/28th battalions, the London Regiment T. F.) Commissions, promotions, appointments and rewards for service in the field obtained by members of the corps since 4th August 1914* (London: Howlett and Son, 1922), pp. XI-XIII.

⁹⁵³ TNA, WO95/3963, Letter from CIGS, General Sir William Robertson to IGC, General F. T. Clayton, 28th November 1915.

⁹⁵⁴ WO95/3957, Report on training at Rouen and Le Havre bases by Lieutenant-Colonel F. J. Duncan, 1st June 1915.

respectively, the discovery of these men was merely chance. The small staff at each base were administratively overwhelmed with the number of reinforcements being processed, and were unable to consistently assess soldiers before they were drafted by 3rd Echelon. This had, however, improved by November 1915. Base staff attempted to keep drafts for a minimum of one week and, during this process, assessed training on key skills, such as musketry and grenade throwing. If any deficiencies were found, training focused on rectifying these shortcomings and bringing soldiers to what was deemed an average standard. Table 6.1, based on the information collected by the Base Commandant of Le Havre, Brigadier-General J. J. Asser, demonstrates the scale of the problem. Out of the 9,183 reinforcements assessed between October and December 1915 for the 1st, 7th, 8th and 47th (2nd London) Divisions at Le Havre, 3,571, or 38.9 percent, were deemed inefficient for active service.⁹⁵⁵ Whilst no figures are available for the Canadian Corps during this period, it is instructive to note that the quality of training reached a crisis point during the Battle of the Somme, with 70 percent of reinforcements deemed inefficient in October 1916.⁹⁵⁶

Table 6.1: Testing of drafts for 1st, 7th, 8th and 47th (2nd London) Divisions at Le Havre, October-December 1915.⁹⁵⁷

Testing of drafts, October-December 1915.	Number tested	Deemed inefficient (%)
1 st Division	3,212	906 (28.2)
7 th Division	2,698	1,193 (44.2)
8 th Division	1,693	667 (39.4)
47 th (2 nd London) Division	1,580	805 (50.9)
Total	9,183	3,571 (38.9)

Whilst this demonstrates a significant increase in testing capacity and the challenge training staff faced, it contributes to the argument made in chapter two and four that the

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid; TNA, WO95/3963, Training report from Commandant Le Havre, Brigadier-General J. J. Asser, 2nd December 1915

⁹⁵⁶ Stewart, William F., *The Embattled General: Sir Richard Turner and the First World War* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), p. 153.

⁹⁵⁷ TNA, WO95/3963, Training report from Asser, 2nd December 1915.

distinctive identities between regular, Territorial and New Army units broke down in 1915 and not 1916, as claimed by Peter Simkins. Specifically, the identity of the regular and New Armies, which had become synonymous due to the latter's reliance on the SR and ER to provide reinforcements, should also be extended to the Territorials. Despite the distinct disadvantages faced by the Territorial reinforcement system, 50.9 percent of reinforcements received by the 47th (2nd London) Division were deemed 'inefficient', whilst 44.2 and 39.4 percent of reinforcements received by the 7th and 8th Division respectively were classified as untrained. Differences were negligible and demonstrates how the regular, New Army and Territorial reserve systems produced recruits of similar expertise. Though it continued to draw upon different parts of society, it is fair to argue that the 'four armies' concept was a recruitment trend that begun to blur from early 1915, once regular, Territorial and New Army units had been deployed overseas.⁹⁵⁸

Nevertheless, to ensure that the flow of manpower was timely, staff were only able to train reinforcements to an efficiency that enabled them to integrate with their units. This compromise led to complaints from 13 divisions in November 1915. In total, drafts received by 15 regular, seven Territorial and 36 New Army battalions, across 31 regiments, were noted as having inadequate training in drill, musketry and grenade throwing. Whilst some regular officers inevitably compared the training of new recruits to the old regular army, dissatisfaction was clearly widespread. Indeed, the Training Field Officer at the Étaples base, Major J. E. Chapman, admitted that reinforcements would only have a 'slight knowledge' of key skills, such as grenade throwing, due to the limited time, equipment and training facilities available. Unsurprisingly, he argued that all drafts would benefit from several weeks additional training but acknowledged this was impossible under current conditions. By following the current procedure, the IBDs at Étaples already owed 8,000 reinforcements to frontline units in December 1915.⁹⁵⁹

Moreover, the lack of accommodation at British bases, initially located at Le Havre and Rouen, disproportionately affected the ability of some IBDs to implement these reforms.

⁹⁵⁸ Simkins, Peter, 'The Four Armies, 1914-1918' in Chandler, David. G and Beckett, Ian F. W. (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 235-255.

⁹⁵⁹ TNA, WO95/3963, IGC war diary, 8th December 1915 and report on training at Étaples Base by Commandant, Brigadier-General A. G. Thomson, and Major J. E. Chapman, 3rd December 1915; Boff, *Winning and Losing on the Western Front*, p. 58.

Although simplifying the movement of drafts on the Lines of Communication, both were major logistical hubs for the imperial army and space for personnel was limited. Due to the rapid expansion of the imperial army during 1914 and early 1915, all available space for accommodation had been used by February. The percentage of reinforcements held for each unit had to be reduced from 15 to 10 percent to enable this and the deployment of additional IBDs were temporarily suspended until the new training base at Étaples could be established.⁹⁶⁰ However, the latter did not become operational until June 1915 and, initially, prioritised the reception of New Army IBDs.⁹⁶¹ As a result, the 1st Canadian Division, as well as various Territorial formations, were forced to leave their own in England. Neither were able to maintain reinforcements in France, as drafts had to be processed by other IBDs and sent onto the frontline as fast as possible, which undermined the efficiency of the training system.⁹⁶² The Canadian General Base Depot (CGBD) did not become operational until September 1915 and, unlike British and other Dominion IBDs, was forced by imperial authorities to accommodate and process reinforcements for the entire Canadian Corps. Regardless of the reasoning, this added disproportionate pressures onto the small and inexperienced Canadian staff who struggled to process, let alone systematically test, reinforcements for two divisions and corps troops. The scale of the problem only grew with the arrival of the 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions in December 1915 and August 1916 respectively, and requests to move to Étaples for additional accommodation were rejected by the Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General G. H. Fowke, in October 1916. This resulted in overcrowding, with the depot, designed to accommodate approximately 6,000 men, holding 10,400 in December 1916. Despite the regular addition of staff and convalescing soldiers throughout the period, the CGBD was overworked and under resourced compared to its

⁹⁶⁰ TNA, WO95/3953, letter from IGC, General Sir J. A. P. Maxwell, to unknown officer, 14th February 1915; TNA, WO95/3972, letters between Maxwell and Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Sir Nevil Macready, 19th and 21st October 1914.

⁹⁶¹ TNA, WO95/3953, IGC war diary, 2nd February 1915 and telegram from French to War Office, 31st January 1915; TNA, WO95/3973, IGC AQMG war diary, 26th March 1915; TNA, WO95/4026, Étaples base war diary, July 1915.

⁹⁶² TNA, WO95/3973, IGC AQMG war diary, 25th February 1915; Nicholson, G.W.L., *Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919: Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1962), pp. 229-230.

counterparts, processing, assessing and training reinforcements equivalent to what four IBDs and one GBD handled in the rest of the imperial army.⁹⁶³

Even after the BEF reorganised their IBDs by regiment in July 1916, the CGBD had to test and train drafts for a larger number of units than the British and Dominion average. For instance, the 7th, 8th and 47th IBDs at Le Havre supplied reinforcements to 48 infantry battalions of the Rifle Brigade and London Regiment. In comparison, the CGBD sent reinforcements to 48 infantry battalions, all non-infantry arms and corps troops of the Canadian Corps.⁹⁶⁴ On average, 17,266 Canadian reinforcements and convalescents arrived and departed the depot each month between August 1916 and May 1917. This was 544 percent larger than the average at Australian, British and New Zealand IBDs at Étaples, which received and dispatched an estimated 2,682 convalescents and reinforcements each per month during the same period.⁹⁶⁵ Although this average underestimates the number of reinforcements processed by British and Dominion IBDs, as the four GBDs at Étaples would have handled a smaller proportion of non-infantry reinforcements, it demonstrates the severe challenges faced by the CGBD. Despite the severity of the situation, this was only rectified in April and June 1917, when the CGBD was split into four IBDs and one GBD and moved from Le Havre to Étaples. Whilst positive, its impact was limited, as the smaller number of reinforcements coming from the UK led to the four Canadian IBDs being amalgamated into two, four months later.⁹⁶⁶

Overall, the imperial army must bear responsibility for this, despite the initial reluctance of Canadian authorities to supervise the CGBD. The Minister of Militia and Defence's representative in England, Major-General John Wallace Carson, had dismissed their

⁹⁶³ Australian War Memorial (AWM), AWM4 33/10/1, Australian IBDs war diary, 16th December 1917; Library and Archives Canada (LAC), RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 5048, file 917, CGBD war diary, September-November 1915 and 30th November 1916; TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 26th October 1916; TNA, WO95/4190, New Zealand Reinforcement Camp war diary, 12th December 1917; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 234-241.

⁹⁶⁴ TNA, WO95/3969, Letter from Deputy Adjutant General, Major-General E. R. C. Graham, to Macready, 9th June 1916; TNA, WO95/3970, Letter from Clayton to War Office, 31st July 1916; Cook, *Shock Troops*, pp. 22-23; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 110-113; James, E. A, *British Regiments, 1914-1918* (London: Samson Books, 1978), pp. 110-111.

⁹⁶⁵ Figures for December 1916 were not recorded in the Étaples base war diary and have therefore been adapted for other war diaries; AWM, AWM4 33/10/1, Australian IBD war diary, 16th December 1917; TNA, WO95/4026, Étaples Base war diary, August-November 1916; TNA, WO95/4027, Étaples Base war diary, January-May 1917; TNA, WO95/4190, New Zealand Reinforcement Camp war diary, 12th December 1917; Hines, *Refilling Haig's Army*, pp. 319-321; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 237.

⁹⁶⁶ TNA, WO95/43, 3rd Echelon (Canadian Section) war diary, 7th August 1917.

plea for assistance in November 1915, whilst the GOC Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Edwin Alderson, practically ignored them. As a result, staff at the CGBD were isolated until December 1916, when they were supported by the newly formed ministry of OMFC. It applied pressure onto the War Office until it transferred the CGBD to Étaples and, independent of imperial authorities, reorganised it.⁹⁶⁷ The latter had established a Canadian base depot system in contradiction to their own practices and, seemingly, were oblivious to the problems it caused. Considering that the IGC, General Sir F. T. Clayton, explained the need of the system in April 1915, when the War Office questioned the necessity of each division having its own IBD, imperial conduct on this matter was culpable.⁹⁶⁸

However, the IGC and base staff had, under extremely disadvantageous circumstances, created a system that could work, provided they were given sufficient time and resources to test and train drafts upon arrival. It is not surprising therefore that the role of IBDs officially changed as British bases, namely Calais, Étaples, Le Havre and Rouen, expanded, refined and codified its training facilities and practices throughout 1916 and 1917. These training facilities, commonly known as bull rings, had three key aims. The first was to test the efficiency of all drafts and provide further training to those who did not pass a reasonable standard. Secondly, to give a 'final polish' to reinforcements, ensuring their training was up to date with the latest lessons from the front. Lastly, to continue training those who were not automatically drafted to their units. In part, this system only became possible due to the establishment of clearer procedures for the movement of drafts. Whilst authority for drafting remained with 3rd Echelon and, in an emergency, could dispatch all soldiers to the frontline, standard practice was for reinforcements to be assessed on a pre-established syllabus before being sent to their unit.⁹⁶⁹

The content of the programme and length of time it took to complete changed throughout 1916 and 1917, reflecting the changing nature and growing complexity of trench warfare. During the Battle of the Somme in 1916, instructors tested reinforcements upon

⁹⁶⁷ LAC, RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 5048, file 917, CGBD war diary, 2nd September and 9th November 1915; Holt, *filling the Ranks*, pp. 159 and 239-240.

⁹⁶⁸ TNA, WO95/3973, IGC AQMG war diary, 3rd April 1915.

⁹⁶⁹ AWM, AWM25 947/8, Memorandum on British methods of training reinforcements, 31st October 1916; Frederickson, 'Australian Infantry on the Western Front', pp. 102-106.

their musketry, gas drill, grenade throwing and bayonet fighting. In musketry, they had to show their ability to quickly load and unload magazines, adjust their sights, rapidly aim and fire, as well as how to care for their arms and ammunition. Grenade throwing was conducted with dummy and live bombs, and reinforcements had to demonstrate their knowledge of current practice and tactics. They also had to display their bayonet skills on an assault course and, to complete their gas drill, pass through a gas chamber twice. Approximately 2,000 to 3,000 reinforcements could be processed within three days and a 'good draft' could be ready for the front line within five days of arriving in France. If reinforcements were not immediately posted to their units, they were provided with additional training, which focused upon trench warfare, skirmishing and steady drill. They were taught how to construct trenches and set up barbed wire, how to conduct a trench relief, as well as several skills for open warfare, including signals, judging distances, the use of cover and how NCOs maintained fire control.⁹⁷⁰ By the beginning of 1917, this training programme had been expanded and took an average of nine days to complete. Those who failed these tests, or were considered ill-disciplined, were reported to 3rd Echelon as inadequate for active service and, unless urgently needed, kept for further training.⁹⁷¹ This process, though in action since 1916, was officially codified in June 1917 through the publication of *SS152, Instructions for the Training of the British Armies in France*.⁹⁷²

The scale of work conducted at training facilities was extensive and should be considered an impressive administrative and training feat. The Étaples base alone had received 1,916 officers and 33,268 other ranks in July 1917 and, after assessing them on key skills over a nine day course, posted 1,765 officers and 39,630 men to the frontline.⁹⁷³ Yet, a by-product of this intense training regime was harsh discipline and gruelling conditions. Recruits had little freedom, were housed in uncomfortable conditions and given poor rations. Instructors were reportedly abusive and authoritative, and led recruits through extremely

⁹⁷⁰ AWM, AWM25 947/8, Memorandum on British methods of training reinforcements, 31st October 1916; Frederickson, 'Australian Infantry on the Western Front', p. 106.

⁹⁷¹ AWM, AWM25 947/8, Memorandum on British methods of training reinforcements, 31st October 1916; TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 11th April 1917; Frederickson, 'Australian Infantry on the Western Front', pp. 103-108.

⁹⁷² *SS152, Instructions for the Training of the British Armies in France* (London: HMSO, 1917), p. 15; Frederickson, 'Australian Infantry on the Western Front', pp. 107 and 122-123.

⁹⁷³ TNA, WO95/4027, Étaples Base war diary, July 1917.

demanding exercises.⁹⁷⁴ During gas drill, for example, soldiers had to pass through the gas chamber twice, with and without their respirators. Though beneficial, as soldiers could understand its effects and learn to operate their apparatus under pressure, it was challenging.⁹⁷⁵ This regime was particularly frustrating for recycled convalescents who, upon arrival at IBDs, had to undertake basic training (again) before returning to their units. Yet, there were benefits to this, as many convalescents needed refresher training to keep pace with tactical and technological developments on the Western Front.⁹⁷⁶ Although historians have claimed this led to the supposed Étaples Mutiny in September 1917, the training system did not directly cause it. As will be discussed, it was the result of mounting pressure caused by the Third Battle of Ypres and poor management of 'bread and butter' issues.

These conditions also made it difficult to instil a sense of *esprit de corps* amongst reinforcements. Pre-war regimental identity was based upon the notion of belonging to a unique entity with its own history, traditions and successes. Officers and men, who were mostly drawn from the same locality, belonged to their regiments and became part of 'imagined communities' that supported one another to uphold its virtues. Though soldiers by no means based their entire identity upon their membership of military groups, it could inspire strong loyalty to a regiment or battalion. Yet, as Timothy Bowman argues, 'the British regimental system had been designed to assimilate small numbers of recruits into regular military life' during the era of imperial policing. Men undertook six months of basic training at depots in the UK and, in addition to learning the skills needed on the battlefield, were taught by regimental officers about the regiment, its history, culture, achievements and, most importantly, their place within it. This new military identity fostered a regimental *esprit de corps* that was cemented in their battalions by 'time and habit', which bound soldiers together through daily duties and minor operations. It was impossible, however, to maintain this system in the Great War. Horrendous casualties, rapid expansion and the pressing need to

⁹⁷⁴ Gill, Douglas and Dallas, Gloden, 'Mutiny at Étaples Base in 1917', *Past and Present*, 69 (1975), pp. 88-112; Dallas, Gloden and Gill, Douglas, *The Unknown Army: Mutinies in the British Army in World War I* (London: Verso, 1985), pp. 65-73.

⁹⁷⁵ AWM, AWM25 947/8, Memorandum on British methods of training reinforcements, 31st October 1916; Frederickson, 'Australian Infantry on the Western Front', p. 106.

⁹⁷⁶ Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare*, p. 97.

supply reinforcements to rebuild battalions, some several times over the course of the war, had all undermined these traditional methods of generating regimental *esprit de corps*.⁹⁷⁷

Even if recruits had fostered some form of regimental identity in the UK, it could not be developed at bull rings. Soldiers were increasingly isolated from their regiments during training and, despite the shift to regimental IBDs in July 1916, they were trained by instructors who had no regimental connection. As will be discussed later, most were unfit officers and NCOs that had the challenging task of gauging the proficiency of countless reinforcements within a limited timeframe. Whilst harsh discipline, gruelling training and the (minor) risk of being transferred to a different regiment exacerbated this, the notion of regimental *esprit de corps* had begun to shift. Men increasingly looked beyond the regiment as an institution and identified with the battalion and its growing achievements. Even if battalions had not existed before 1914, each had developed their own unique 'spirit' that was underpinned by, 'the human reality of a group of people sharing a common experience consisting at times of acute discomfort and physical and psychological terror.' These groups of soldiers, often referred to as primary groups, became an essential component of regimental *esprit de corps* in the First World War, as soldiers came to identify with the men they fought beside. Divisional spirit also appeared throughout the First World War, with men taking pride in the achievements of its parent formation. Yet, such expressions were limited and circumstantial, as these entities were more detached and metaphysical than the battalion and the primary groups within it.⁹⁷⁸

It was therefore impossible to kindle this mentality within reinforcements who trained in isolation. Though recycled convalescents were able to reintegrate with their battalions, most reinforcements could only develop a strong *esprit de corps* once they had been absorbed into their battalions through training or service. As Major Alex Ross, 28th Canadian Battalion, commented, the battalion "'had developed a very strong esprit de corps and as long as we had a nucleus of the old timers they [reinforcements and 'old timers'] all

⁹⁷⁷ Bowman, Timothy, *Irish Regiments in the Great War: Discipline and Morale* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 24; Connelly, Mark, *Steady the Buffs! A Regiment, A region, and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 7; French, David, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People c.1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 62-64, 73-74, 78-79, 282 and 338.

⁹⁷⁸ Campbell, David C. G., 'The divisional experience in the C.E.F.: a social and operational history of the 2nd Canadian division, 1915-1918' (University of Calgary PhD Thesis, 2003), pp. 51, 472, 474-475 and 510-513; French, *Military Identities*, p. 338.

seemed to become the same and in a very short time.” Veterans therefore provided a sense of continuity in terms of character and identity that, through collective action such as training, could permeate new reinforcements.⁹⁷⁹ Fostering *esprit de corps* in reinforcement training was therefore reliant upon decentralised training at the battalion and, possibly, divisional level. As will be discussed, this was considered by Haig and the GOC Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Edwin Alderson, from 1916. Though the Canadian Corps were able to implement this, the growing manpower crisis made it impossible to enact in the BEF.

Nevertheless, the overall success of this model should be attributed to the IGC and his staff, rather than French and Haig at GHQ. French had taken little interest in the problem of training drafts and, apart from a few *ad hoc* alterations to the responsibilities of IBDs, he did little to create or guide the reinforcement training system. In part, this can be explained by the *FSR, 1909*, which had split administrative and command responsibilities. It was the responsibility of the IGC and his successor, GOC Lines of Communication, to control and organise troops in the rear, whilst the Commander-in-Chief was not to interfere unless the system was in the process of breaking down. Yet, this created a two-tier staff system that isolated the IGC from GHQ. Indeed, Clayton and his staff had minimal communication and direction from French and were forced to independently create and organise a training system from scratch. Though Haig paid more attention to administrative matters, his impact was limited, as Clayton had already established the training system by the end of 1915.⁹⁸⁰

Whilst French should be criticised for this, his conduct does reflect the broader attitude of the British officer corps towards administrative and organisational duties. Forged through a century of small colonial conflicts, combat and a battlefield command were seen as the primary responsibility and measure of an officer.⁹⁸¹ This attitude was also prevalent within the Dominion forces, as most had been trained or led by British officers since 1904.⁹⁸² The GOC AIF and 1st Australian Division, Major-General Sir William Throsby Bridges, notoriously ignored the administrative responsibilities of both forces. After a failed attempt to shift them onto the GOC Force in Egypt, General Sir John Maxwell, in early 1915, Bridges assigned them,

⁹⁷⁹ Campbell, ‘The divisional experience in the C.E.F’, pp. 246-247.

⁹⁸⁰ Brown, *British Logistics*, pp. 77, 80, 85-86 and 104.

⁹⁸¹ *Ibid*, pp. 77 and 85.

⁹⁸² Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, pp. 44-94.

including the duty of organising and training drafts, onto the OC AIF Base Depot, Colonel Victor Sellheim. After Bridges' death at Gallipoli in May 1915, the process was repeated by his successor, Lieutenant-General Sir William Birdwood, the GOC I Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) and, from 1918, Fourth Army. Like Bridges, he delegated most administrative responsibilities related to the AIF onto his Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Brudenell White, and the OC AIF Administrative Headquarters in London, Lieutenant-General Thomas Griffiths. This outcome is not surprising, as an active field command would have absorbed the attention of most officers and left administrative arrangements, including the supply and organisation of reinforcements, low on their list of priorities.⁹⁸³

Yet, Birdwood's limited grasp on reinforcement policy was likely influenced by his ambition to lead an 'Australasian' or 'Dominion' army from 1915. When the War Office announced that the 3rd Australian Division may have to be broken up for reinforcements in August 1916, after the 5th Australian Division had suffered 5,533 casualties at Fromelles the month before, Birdwood protested.⁹⁸⁴ He claimed that, 'the Australian government would much dislike the idea of breaking up this division... I feel confident that the Commonwealth Government would be quite willing to send a larger percentage of reinforcements so as to keep their five divisions going... the Commonwealth government [should] be informed as to the percentages thought necessary.'⁹⁸⁵ Whilst a decision for the Australian Government, Birdwood had won over their confidence through extensive private correspondence with both the Australian Prime Minister, William 'Billy' Hughes, and the Minister for Defence, Senator Sir George Foster Pearce. Not only did Hughes' dismiss the idea of breaking up the 3rd Australian Division, but he even proposed to Haig the idea of Birdwood leading an 'Australasian Army', providing enough men could be found for a sixth division. Though one of many factors that influenced Hughes' Labour Government to hold a referendum on conscription in 1916, it is clear that Birdwood had used his influence to further his command

⁹⁸³ Bou, Jean and Dennis, Peter, *The Australian Imperial Force* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 53-54, 59-61, 122 and 138; Connor, John, *Anzac and Empire: George Foster Pearce and the Foundation of Australian Defence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 61-65, 69 and 72-73.

⁹⁸⁴ Bou and Dennis, *The Australian Imperial Force*, pp. 59-61; Charlton, Peter, *Pozières 1916: Australians on the Somme* (Sydney: Methuen Haynes, 1986), p. 278; Grey, Jeffrey, *A Military History of Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 98.

⁹⁸⁵ Archives New Zealand (ANZ), 25038, R24048325 (WA252/2), Letter from GOC I Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), Lieutenant-General William Birdwood, to GOC II ANZAC, Lieutenant-General Alexander Godley, 19th August 1916; Charlton, *Pozières 1916*, p. 278.

position, rather than fulfilling his role to help the government formulate a reinforcement policy. This civil-military relationship had disastrous results, as neither Birdwood, nor the Australian government, attempted to change the size of the AIF in the wake of several manpower crises. Despite the failure to introduce conscription in 1916 and 1917, Birdwood retained all five Australian divisions and only three units, the 36th, 47th and 52nd Australian Battalions, were disbanded in 1918. With no objection from Hughes or Pearce, the AIF's strength had dwindled and, by the Autumn of 1918, 'the Australian Corps was a spent force verging on total collapse'.⁹⁸⁶

Though the administrative and field command of the CEF was not invested into one officer, Major-General Sir Edwin Alderson, the GOC 1st Canadian Division and, from September 1915, the Canadian Corps, had the same attitude to administrative responsibilities as Bridges and Birdwood.⁹⁸⁷ For example, he took no interest in the plight of the CGBD at Le Havre, but complained to the Canadian Minister of Militia and Defence, Colonel Sir Sam Hughes, in February 1916, claiming that the Canadian Training Division had failed to provide proper training to drafts.⁹⁸⁸ As Ian Malcolm Brown argues, this trend was unfortunate, as commanders often misunderstood the importance of administrative work and the positive impact it had upon the imperial war effort. Indeed, French, who had recognised the problem of reinforcement training, was either unwilling to assist the IGC in organising a reinforcement training system, or simply misunderstood the magnitude of work he was demanding. Regardless of the reason, he left the IGC and his staff to put into action GHQ's vague solutions throughout 1915 and 1916 with inadequate support, time and, as will be seen, resources. The fact that they were able to create a training system whilst, simultaneously, remodelling the

⁹⁸⁶ Bean, Charles, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918: The Australian Imperial Force in France during the Main German Offensive, 1918*, Vol. V (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1941), pp. 657-658; Beaumont, Joan, 'The politics of a divided society', in Beaumont, Joan (ed.), *Australia's War, 1914-1918* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1995), pp. 43-45; Bou and Dennis, *The Australian Imperial Force*, pp. 50-54 and 69; Connor, *Anzac and Empire*, pp. 81-82 and 102; Pugsley, Christopher, *The ANZAC Experience: New Zealand, Australia and Empire in the First World War* (Auckland: Raupo Publishing, 2001), pp. 272-274.

⁹⁸⁷ Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 209-233.

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid, pp. 235 and 239; Duguid, A. F., *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1914-1919: From the Outbreak of the Great War to the Formation of the Canadian Corps, August 1914-September 1915, Vol. I, Part II* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1938), p.7.

Lines of Communication to meet the rapid expansion of the BEF, is a testimony to their skill and hard work.⁹⁸⁹

There were, however, a number of problems that effected the consistency and efficiency of training provided to British and Dominion reinforcements between 1915 and 1917. Firstly, the system could only balance the competing factors of speed and proficiency during periods of inactivity. As discussed in chapter four, drafts took an estimated two to three weeks to arrive at IBDs in France, which were unable to maintain the 10 percent reserve outlined in *FSR* 1909. As a result, training standards were dropped in moments of extreme stress. In the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Loos, instructors at Étaples admitted to abandoning systematic testing to meet demands, drafting 1,152 officers and 23,230 other ranks to depleted divisions throughout October 1915.⁹⁹⁰ The CGBD rushed a colossal 9,994 reinforcements to the Canadian Corps in June 1916, after it suffered severe casualties at the Battle of Mount Sorrel.⁹⁹¹ Even during the Third Battle of Ypres, once the system had been fully established, the nine day training course was reduced to five in August 1917 to speed up the movement of drafts.⁹⁹²

Secondly, the number of drafts actually available for training was disproportionately small due to the conflict of secondary roles. The imperial army had trebled in size to 945,025 men between January and October 1915, which required an estimated 127,000 tons of war material a month. Despite an expansion of the ASC to 22 companies, the IGC, General F. T. Clayton, required another 16 companies to support the imperial army, alongside an additional two for every new division deployed.⁹⁹³ Yet, with increasing pressure from the War Office to economise on the number of fit personnel in the rear, Clayton had to look elsewhere for labour.⁹⁹⁴ Whilst he utilised convalescents, French, Belgian and, after some resistance, colonial labour, reinforcements at each base depot were used to undertake manual labour

⁹⁸⁹ Brown, *British Logistics*, pp. 75-138.

⁹⁹⁰ TNA, WO95/3963, Report on training at Étaples Base by Thomson and Chapman, 3rd December 1915.

⁹⁹¹ Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 238-239.

⁹⁹² TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 22nd August 1917.

⁹⁹³ TNA, WO95/3961, IGC war diary, 6th and 29th October 1915; Brown, *British Logistics*, pp. 78-79 and 103.

⁹⁹⁴ TNA, WO95/3962, Letters between Clayton and War Office, 24th and 27th November 1915; Brown, *British Logistics*, pp. 84-86.

from 1915.⁹⁹⁵ For instance, it was estimated in June 1915 that 1,200 to 1,400 men a day were needed at Le Havre for work parties, with another 350 to 400 for regimental fatigues.⁹⁹⁶ These practices were unpopular and, in November 1915, the CGBD complained that 100 Canadian reinforcements had been selected for dock work two days in a row.⁹⁹⁷

This was exacerbated by the creation of entrenching battalions, which were used, bar a brief resurrection at the beginning of 1918, between July 1915 and September 1917. As mentioned in chapter four, these units were designed to supply an organised body of manpower for work on the Lines of Communication.⁹⁹⁸ Thus, a sizable proportion of reinforcements were posted from IBDs to entrenching battalions to undertake menial labour, with the 1st Canadian Entrenching Battalion receiving 226 officers and 9,287 other ranks between August 1916 and September 1917.⁹⁹⁹ Although entrenching battalions were also tasked with training reinforcements, they were unsuccessful. Most only remained with entrenching battalions for a short period of time and were divided into small work parties that were spread across a large area, far behind the front line.¹⁰⁰⁰

The CEF had not followed the British model, as entrenching battalions were not created until July 1916, after GOC Second Army, General Sir Herbert Plumer, noted the irregularity with GHQ. Rather than a disagreement of method, it was caused by the absence of a Canadian IBD, which made the supply of routine wastage difficult. Despite this, Canadian entrenching battalions experienced the same problems as their British counterparts and were no more successful at providing training.¹⁰⁰¹ Indeed, the GOC Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie, had requested the abolishment of entrenching battalions in August 1917. In his opinion, they were, 'not a success, as men receive very little military training and

⁹⁹⁵ TNA, WO95/3961, IGC war diary, 29th October 1915; TNA, WO95/3968, IGC war diary, 7th May 1916; TNA, WO95/3970, IGC war diary, 24th August 1916.

⁹⁹⁶ TNA, WO95/3957, Report on training at Rouen and Le Havre by Duncan, 1st June 1915.

⁹⁹⁷ LAC, RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 5048, file 917, CGBD war diary, 26th November 1915.

⁹⁹⁸ TNA, WO95/45, 3rd Echelon war diary, 29th July 1915; TNA, WO95/3958, IGC war diary, 14th and 20th July 1915.

⁹⁹⁹ LAC, RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 5009, file 716, 1st Canadian Entrenching Battalion war diary, August 1916 – September 1917.

¹⁰⁰⁰ For examples, see; Liverpool Maritime Museum (LMM), King's Regiment Collection (KRC), KR/2/1-2, 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) casualty books, Vol. I and II, 1915-1917; TNA, WO95/905, 11th Entrenching Battalion war diary, July-October 1915; TNA, WO95/947, 6th Entrenching Battalion war diary, July 1915 – December 1916.

¹⁰⁰¹ LAC, RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 5009, file 716-719, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Canadian Entrenching Battalions war diaries, July 1916 – September 1917; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 173 and 242.

their discipline... does not improve'.¹⁰⁰² Though the disbandment of entrenching battalions in September 1917 was a positive development, reinforcements could still be used for basic labour. For example, nine officers and 500 other ranks were withdrawn from the 4th Canadian Divisional Wing and used for constructing secondary defences in May 1918.¹⁰⁰³

Overall, entrenching battalions could only balance these conflicting responsibilities if there was a large pool of fully trained replacements to draw upon. Whilst this was impossible to achieve for the AIF, BEF and, to some extent, the CEF, due to the growing manpower crises in each nation, it did work for the NZEF. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd New Zealand Entrenching Battalions were recreated in February 1918 and, combining with the New Zealand Divisional Wing in March 1918, formed the New Zealand Entrenching Group, which became responsible for training drafts and providing a labour workforce for the imperial army. This was only possible due to the generous surplus of trained personnel in France and the UK, after the 4th New Zealand Brigade had been disbanded in February 1918. Initially formed of trained veterans from the 1917 campaigns, entrenching battalions were topped up with convalescents who had received refresher training. Only then were recruits in the UK drafted and, as a result, only made up a small proportion of the monthly intake. For instance, 7 officers and 520 other ranks were drafted from England in June 1918, compared to the 20 officer and 1,289 other rank convalescents that were recycled through the medical system on the Western Front. This generous surplus enabled the New Zealand Entrenching Group to create dedicated training companies for newly arrived reinforcements and, from May 1918, a minimum of 283 men per entrenching battalion were always under instruction.¹⁰⁰⁴ The New Zealand Minister of Defence, Sir James Allen, must be credited for this success, as he resisted continuous pressure from the imperial government to expand the NZEF beyond one division. Unlike the Australian, British and, to some extent, Canadian governments, civil and military authorities in New Zealand struck a balance between expansion and sustainability from 1915,

¹⁰⁰² TNA, WO95/43, 3rd Echelon (Canadian Section) war diary, 5th August 1917.

¹⁰⁰³ TNA, WO95/1450, 4th Division AQMG war diary, 12th May 1918.

¹⁰⁰⁴ TNA, WO95/372, Report on New Zealand entrenching battalions by Third Army, 20th August 1918; TNA, WO95/1013, New Zealand Entrenching Group and 1st, 2nd and 3rd New Zealand Entrenching Battalions war diaries, February-October 1918; TNA, WO95/4190, New Zealand Reinforcement Camp war diary, June 1918; Crawford, John, 'New Zealand is being bled to death': The Formation, Operations and Disbandment of the Fourth Brigade', in Crawford, John and McGibbon, Ian (eds), *New Zealand's Great War: New Zealand, The Allies and the First World War* (Auckland: Exisle Publishing, 2007), pp. 250-265.

which enabled entrenching battalions to function as reinforcement training formation as late as October 1918.¹⁰⁰⁵

Canadian reinforcements were at a greater disadvantage to their British and Dominion counterparts due to the use of the Ross rifle between 1915 and 1917. Principally, this was caused by the decision to arm the 1st Canadian Division with the British Lee-Enfield in May 1915, whilst the remainder of the Canadian Corps retained the Ross rifle until September 1916. This created a lack of uniformity in weaponry and forced the Canadian reserve system to create two streams of reinforcements who were trained with British and Canadian rifles.¹⁰⁰⁶ This compromise came about due to a debate over the use and retention of the Ross rifle, which had been caused by its poor performance at the Second Battle of Ypres between April and May 1915. From a technical perspective, it had a small clip of 5 rounds and was six inches longer than the Lee-Enfield rifle, making it cumbersome to fire and reload in the trenches. Furthermore, the bolt mechanism regularly overheated, making rapid fire difficult and far less effective. Yet, for the Ross rifle to properly function, it, 'required Canadian-manufactured ammunition, which was not available in any quantity on the Western Front.'¹⁰⁰⁷ Thus, it was liable to jam when using British Mark VII ammunition; Lieutenant-Colonel F. O. W. Loomis of the 13th Canadian Battalion stated that rifles regularly jammed after firing 15 to 30 rounds rapidly and, 'to loosen the bolt it was necessary to use the boot heel or the handle of an entrenching tool'.¹⁰⁰⁸

As a result of this, the GOC 1st Canadian Division, Major-General Sir Edwin Alderson, forwarded a series of conflicted reports to GHQ about the suitability of the Ross rifle for active service from British and Canadian officers. A committee formed by French condemned the rifle in June and, after further investigation, it was found that over 3,000 soldiers of the 1st Canadian Division had already discarded the Ross rifle for the Lee-Enfield. Although GHQ re-

¹⁰⁰⁵ ANZ, 8638 (AD1/708/97/4/1), Memorandum on reinforcement policy from GOC New Zealand Commandant, Major-General Alfred Robin, to Minister of Defence, Colonel Sir James Allen, 5th October 1917; ANZ, 16145, (ALLEN1/2/M1/15 Part 4), Letter from Godley to Allen, 25th August 1917; ANZ, 25038, R24048324 (WA252/1), Letter from Allen to Godley, 15th February 1916; 'Provision of Reinforcement Drafts for the Expeditionary Force' (1915), Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, H-19E; Crawford, 'New Zealand is being bled to death', p. 264.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 164.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare*, pp. 11-12, 16-17 and 38-40.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid, pp. 40; Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces, Vol. I, Part II*, p. 87.

equipped the 1st Canadian Division with the latter in June 1915, in preparation for operations near Givenchy, it was impossible to do this for the entire CEF. Not only were Lee-Enfield rifles in short supply, but Canadian authorities, specifically Hughes, were hostile to this.¹⁰⁰⁹ Indeed, the historiographical debate has primarily focused upon Hughes' political resistance and influence over civil and military circles in Canada, UK and Europe, which enabled him to keep the Ross rifle for the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions.¹⁰¹⁰ This policy, though flawed, remained until June 1916 when the Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Douglas Haig, forcibly removed the Ross rifle after its poor performance at the Battle of Mount Sorrel.¹⁰¹¹

Yet, due to the chaotic nature of the training system in both Canada and the UK, it was impossible to provide two streams of reinforcements trained with British and Canadian rifles. In Canada, Hughes mandated that all reinforcements must be trained with the Ross rifle and, in the UK, Canadian reserve formations lacked British equipment. For instance, the 23rd Canadian Reserve Battalion supplied reinforcements to both the 1st and 2nd Canadian Division. Yet, with only enough Lee-Enfield rifles for one training company, it regularly drafted recruits, trained with the Ross rifle, to the 1st Canadian Division. As a result, reinforcements, upon arrival at the CGBD, had to be retrained in musketry. Not only did this create additional work for the base staff, but GOC 1st Canadian Division, Major-General Arthur Currie, argued it undermined operational performance. He claimed that the failure of the 1st Canadian Division at the opening of the Battle of Ancre Heights on 8th October 1916 was, 'due to fighting with drafts untrained on the SMLE [Lee-Enfield rifle]'.¹⁰¹²

Problems of uniformity had been foreseen and, as Douglas Delaney has noted, an important result of the 1909 Imperial Conference was an agreement between British and Dominion governments regarding imperial standardisation, including the universal adoption

¹⁰⁰⁹ Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces, Vol. I, Part II*, pp. 87-99; Edmonds, J. E., *Military operations, France and Belgium 1915, Vol. I* (London: Macmillan, 1927), p. 244; Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare*, pp. 34-35, 38-40 and 63-65.

¹⁰¹⁰ Cook, Tim, *The Madman and the Butcher: The Sensational Wars of Sam Hughes and General Arthur Currie* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2011), pp. 41-42, 145-146 and 150; Morton, Desmond, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1993), pp. 97-98; Haycock, Ronald G., *Sam Hughes: The Public Career of a Controversial Canadian, 1885-1916* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), pp. 246-253; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, pp. 155-159.

¹⁰¹¹ Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare*, p. 64.

¹⁰¹² LAC, RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 5048, file 917, CGBD war diary, 3rd November and 4th December 1915; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 163; Stewart, *The Embattled General*, p. 153.

of British equipment.¹⁰¹³ Yet, in 1902, Hughes, as a Conservative MP, had already influenced the Laurier administration to adopt the Ross rifle, claiming British manufacturers would not establish a small-arms factory in Canada to produce the Lee-Enfield rifle. Though Australia was seemingly able to build one in Lithgow in 1909 for this exact purpose, the agreement struck at the Imperial Conference was not binding. As a result, the Canadian government was able to continue equipping the Militia and, subsequently, the CEF, with the Ross rifle.¹⁰¹⁴ Although the Canadian Corps were fully re-equipped with the Lee-Enfield rifle in September 1916, British authorities could not provide enough for reserve battalions in Canada and the UK, which led to the continued use of the Ross Rifle in training.¹⁰¹⁵

Thus, reinforcements for the Canadian Corps, especially for the 1st Canadian Division between June 1915 and September 1916, were increasingly at a disadvantage compared to their British counterparts. Whilst the latter did struggle to equip Territorial and New Army reserve units with Lee-Enfield Rifles, with the former notoriously equipped with outdated 0.275" Japanese rifles in 1915, most reserve formations did receive a small proportion of service rifles for musketry practice. Whilst chapter two notes the numerous problems this created, many Canadian drafts had to repeat basic musketry training in France, which had already been conducted in Canada and the UK. Not only was this a significant duplication of effort, but it disrupted the flow of Canadian reinforcements until 1917 and added significant pressures onto the CGBD.

The last and, arguably, most serious problem affecting the training system was the difficulty of creating a proficient training staff. Although French committed himself to creating one at each base in January 1915, only one officer per base had been appointed by June 1915. Indeed, the number of officers and NCOs available for training changed on a daily basis and depended on the number in camp without other duties to perform.¹⁰¹⁶ Yet, in June 1915, Lieutenant-Colonel F. J. Duncan, a staff officer for the IGC, proposed that an effective training staff could be created from experienced officers and NCOs on the frontline. He suggested that

¹⁰¹³ 1909 (Cd. 4948), *Conference with Representatives of the Self-Governing Dominions on the Naval and Military Defence of the Empire, 1909*; Delaney, *The Imperial Army Project*, pp. 40-41.

¹⁰¹⁴ Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces, Vol. I, Part II*, pp. 76-78; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 32; Morton, *When your number's up*, p. 6.

¹⁰¹⁵ Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 164.

¹⁰¹⁶ TNA, WO95/3957, Report on training at Le Havre and Rouen by Duncan, 1st June 1915.

each division should rotate four officers and four to eight NCOs every month to their corresponding IBD to provide instruction. Not only would this give officers and men a short break from the front, but their practical experience would make them ideal instructors. It economised the use of officers and NCOs for training purposes and gave divisional COs the opportunity to oversee the train of drafts.¹⁰¹⁷

Although the proposal was accepted by GHQ, three problems emerged. Firstly, the quality and number of officers and NCOs sent by divisions was problematic. As early as October 1915, permanent staff at each base started to accuse divisional commanders of sending officers and NCOs, who, due to their temperament or experience, were unsuited to act as instructors. For instance, an unnamed Royal Engineer officer, sent to Rouen in September 1915 to provide instruction on grenade throwing, was reported as having no training or experience with grenades. At the same time, the No. 3 GBD, which was processing reinforcements for the 1st Canadian Division, had no instructor trained with the Ross rifle.¹⁰¹⁸ In part, this can be explained by the inexperienced state of the imperial army in late 1915, with Canadian and New Army divisions lacking officers and NCOs with battlefield or instructional experience. Yet, staff at the various IBDs suspected commanders of using this as an opportunity to rid themselves of troublesome subordinates. Whilst a common accusation within the imperial army, there was some truth to it. The officer in charge of training at Étaples, Major J. E. Chapman, stated that a sizable proportion of officers and NCOs were categorised as ‘valueless’ and most, after receiving training, were only considered of average worth. Other divisions, such as the 24th Division, simply ignored the request for instructors and sent none throughout 1915.¹⁰¹⁹

Furthermore, Commandant of Le Havre Base, Brigadier-General J. J. Asser, argued there was a correlation between the quality of instructors provided by, and the number of complaints received from, each division regarding draft efficiency. In November 1915, he stated that, ‘of the instructors sent from divisions (except the [36th] Ulster Division) and returned as inefficient, six out of eight officers have come from the divisions which now

¹⁰¹⁷ Ibid; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 141.

¹⁰¹⁸ TNA, WO95/3957, Report on training at Le Havre and Rouen by Duncan, 1st June 1915; TNA, WO95/3693, IGC war diary, 8th December 1915 and report on training at Rouen Base by Commandant, Brigadier-General A. G. Marrable, 7th December 1915.

¹⁰¹⁹ TNA, WO95/3693, Report on training at Étaples Base by Thomson and Chapman, 3rd December 1915.

complain, and all the NCOs so returned (16) are from these divisions.’ Thus, it is possible that some divisional commanders used this as an opportunity to temporarily ‘pigeonhole’ inefficient officers and NCOs.¹⁰²⁰ Alternatively, they may not have wanted to lose their best officers for an extended period. As an unknown officer of the 2nd Australian Division summarised in December 1916, ‘the great shortage of experienced officers and NCOs with battalions in the first, together with the urgent need of their service with their unit, possibly influence the selection from those that can most easily be spared, in preference to selection from those most competent to instruction’.¹⁰²¹

Unsurprisingly, Chapman argued it would be more efficient to permanently attach proficient NCOs to each base depot. Time, he argued, was consistently wasted by regularly rotating instructors in and out, as most had to be trained and, if deemed ineffective, replaced.¹⁰²² However, recommendations from the IGC, Clayton, for the permanent attachment of six first class instructors, drawn from two officers and four NCOs per division, were rejected in December 1915.¹⁰²³ This should not have been difficult to provide, considering the creation and continuous expansion of training schools in France at the army, corps and divisional level from 1915.¹⁰²⁴ Yet, officer reinforcements, especially for Irish and Scottish Highland regiments, had become a significant problem from December 1914. Both French and Haig were troubled by the difficulty divisions had in retaining a core of experienced officers and NCOs, and worried about the impact this had on training and frontline duties. There was also mounting pressure from the War Office to comb out all fit men, especially officers, from the rear, due to the developing manpower crises at home. Thus, French only allowed one officer and two NCOs per division to be attached on a temporary basis, whilst Haig only increased this allotment by one officer in 1916. Overall, their

¹⁰²⁰ Ibid and report on training at Le Havre Base by Asser, 2nd December 1915.

¹⁰²¹ AWM, AWM25 947/17 Part 1, Letter from unknown officer to 2nd Australian Division Headquarters, 2nd December 1916.

¹⁰²² TNA, WO95/3693, Report on training at Étaples Base by Thomson and Chapman, 3rd December 1915.

¹⁰²³ Ibid, IGC war diary, 14th December 1915.

¹⁰²⁴ Fox, *Learning to Fight*, pp. 85-87 and 93-94; Frederickson, ‘The Development of Australian Infantry on the Western Front’, pp. 107, 110-111 and 134.

reluctance ensured divisions would only contribute a small number of instructors to reinforcement training.¹⁰²⁵

Despite this, many divisions still saw this as an unjustifiable drain on their finite resources, as reinforcement training was considered the responsibility of the reinforcement system in each Dominion and the UK. The British GOC 2nd Australian Division, Major-General Nevill Maskelyne Smyth, complained that there was a considerable duplication of effort by training reinforcements in Australia, the UK and France.¹⁰²⁶ Indeed, one unknown officer estimated, notably from a very small sample of 20 soldiers, that Australian reinforcements spent six to seven months training in Australia, 11 weeks in England and up to 15 days at Étaples.¹⁰²⁷ This sentiment was echoed by others, such as the GOC Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie. He was not in favour of a training establishment at British bases and believed reinforcements should complete their training in the UK before being drafted.¹⁰²⁸

Lewis Frederickson has rebuked Smyth's claims and argued that, based upon the training provided to Australian infantry, it was a successful system of graduated training. He noted that, 'the standard to which recruits were trained in Australia was rudimentary at best. Recruits were trained in England to a graduation level; and then reinforced at a Base Camp after deploying to the continent. By this time the soldier was no longer a recruit... [and] in accordance with SS152 and 135 it was a Divisional responsibility to consolidate the training of a man when he arrived at his unit'.¹⁰²⁹ Whilst consistent training increases a soldier's confidence and expertise in weaponry and tactics, as well as their chances of survival, the entire training system was exceedingly inefficient.¹⁰³⁰ As chapter two demonstrated, the

¹⁰²⁵ AWM, AWM25 947/17 Part 1, Letter from unknown Officer, 2nd December 1916; TNA, WO32/5091, Letters between Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Douglas Haig and War Office, 24th November 1916 and 15th February 1917; TNA, WO95/25, Adjutant General war diary, 26th December 1914 and 1st January 1915; TNA, WO95/3693, Report on training in France by Chief of Staff for IGC, Lieutenant-General R. M'Douall, 27th November 1915; TNA, WO159/7, Memorandum from Robertson to Haig, 28th December 1916; Brown, *British Logistics*, pp. 84-86, 128-129 and 166.

¹⁰²⁶ AWM, AWM25 947/17 Part 1, Letter from unknown Officer, 2nd December 1916; AWM, AWM25 947/6/495, Letter from GOC 2nd Australian Division, Major-General Nevill Maskelyne Smyth, to 1st ANZAC, 12th March 1917; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 155-156

¹⁰²⁷ AWM, AWM25 947/17 Part 1, Letter from unknown Officer, 2nd December 1916.

¹⁰²⁸ Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 141; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 187.

¹⁰²⁹ Frederickson, 'Australian Infantry on the Western Front', pp. 112-113.

¹⁰³⁰ Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare*, p. 7.

quality of instruction provided between 1914 and 1916 by the British reserve system was poor, as many recruits spent far longer in the reserve than the initial 10 to 12 weeks and, subsequent, 14 weeks of mandatory training required.¹⁰³¹ Despite the improvements made from 1917, the sheer demand for manpower inverted this trend and led to a large number of reinforcements coming overseas with only nine weeks training. As Inspector-General of the Infantry, Major-General G. A. A. Egerton, reported to GHQ Home Forces in July 1917 after a visit to the Third Army School in France, 'the training of platoons and companies at home up to this standard is not possible in ordinary... draft finding formations.'¹⁰³²

This process was even more complicated for each Dominion as reinforcements were shipped to the UK. The reserve systems in both Australia and Canada kept recruits for an extended period of time and provided extensive, albeit not very useful, training before departure. Based on the nominal rolls of the 4th reinforcement draft for the 51st Australian Battalion, sent from Australia to the UK in August 1916, recruits spent an average of 17 to 20 weeks in Australia before departure, with none serving less than four months. This had decreased by the time the 10th reinforcement draft had left in October 1917, with most recruits training for 13 to 16 weeks before departure.¹⁰³³ Despite the time in Australia, the proficiency of reinforcements varied. As a result, recruits, upon arrival in the UK, were tested on the 14 week syllabus and assigned to, and trained from, the week they have achieved. It was rare for a soldier to be classified as fully trained and combined with the voyage to the UK, which took an average of nine to ten weeks, Australian recruits were retained for up to 10 months before they were drafted to France.¹⁰³⁴ This situation was even worse in Canada, as reinforcements, inefficiently recruited via service battalions, had an average of 47 weeks of training before departing on a one to two week voyage to the UK in 1917. This training was worthless as reinforcements, who were also tested upon arrival, achieved an average equivalent to the fourth week of training. The 234th and 248th Canadian battalions, for

¹⁰³¹ Imperial War Museum (IWM), 13802, Report by Inspector-General of infantry, Major-General G. A. A. Egerton, on number of recruits over three months service, 15th May 1916; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 158-162.

¹⁰³² IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on reserve formations, January-December 1917 and 3rd Army School [ND] c. July 1917.

¹⁰³³ AWM, AWM8 23/68/3, Nominal rolls for 4th and 10th Reinforcement draft for 51st Australian battalion, 9th August 1916 and 30th October 1917.

¹⁰³⁴ AWM, AWM4 1/66/2, 'AIF Depots in UK, July 1916 to April 1917' by Major-General Sir N. J. Moore; AWM, AWM4 33/21/1-3, memorandums by 4th Australian Training Group, August-October 1917; Frederickson, 'Australian Infantry on the Western Front', p. 113.

example, spent one year in Canada and did not possess the skills taught in the first week of the training syllabus.¹⁰³⁵ Considering recruits had to spend another eight to 13 weeks training in the UK, it could take over a year for some to reach the Canadian Corps.

New Zealand had managed to create a logical system that streamlined the movement and training of reinforcements. Recruits and conscripts were not automatically posted to reserve formations but called up when needed to fill a space on a pre-planned reinforcement draft. Whilst the size and timing of these drafts changed, as the New Zealand government, in liaison with the War Office and NZEF, consistently re-evaluated wastage rates, recruits were called up for 10 to 13 weeks of preliminary training before being shipped to the UK. Upon arrival, recruits undertook an intensive training programme on specialist subjects, estimated to last a minimum of three weeks in May 1917, before being drafted to the Western Front. Thus, most reinforcements for the NZEF would have only spent an average of six months training and travelling in 1917, compared to the possible estimate of 10 and 12 months in the AIF and CEF, respectively. Despite some criticism of training methods in 1916, the GOC New Zealand Division, Major-General Sir Andrew Russel, noted in June 1917 that, 'reinforcements are as good as ever and there is not a division in France but would welcome them into their ranks'.¹⁰³⁶

It is not surprising therefore that COs viewed the entire system of training reinforcements in Australia, Britain, Canada and France as an inefficient and cumbersome process. Although it did improve from 1917, as described in chapter three, it had failed to train drafts in a timely manner and, so much so, forced the imperial army to create and adapt

¹⁰³⁵ LAC, RG9-III-D-3. Vol. 4950, file number 475, 8th Canadian Reserve Battalion war diary, 4th March 1918; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 148 and 155-156; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, pp. 223-224.

¹⁰³⁶ ANZ, 8638 (AD1/893/39/218), Letter from Commandant NZEF in UK, Colonel J. J. Esson, to Allen, 15th May 1917; ANZ, 16145 (Allen1/1/M1/15), Letters between Godley and Allen, 4th and 26th October 1915 and 15th February 1916; ANZ, 16145 (Allen1/2/M1/15, Part 3), Letter from Godley to Allen, 30th June 1916; ANZ, 16145 (Allen1/2/M1/15, Part 4), Letters between Godley and Allen, 10th December 1916, 7th January 1917 and 11th October 1917, Memorandum from Robin to Allen, 29th January 1917 and Letter from New Zealand CGS, Colonel C. M. Gibbon, to Robin, 31st January 1917; ANZ, 16145 (Allen1/2/M1/15, Part 5), Letter from Allen to Godley, 21st May 1918; ANZ, 16145 (Allen1/7/D1/6/3), Telegram from Allen to Army Council, 3rd February 1916; ANZ, 16145 (Allen1/9), Letter from GOC New Zealand Division, Major-General Andrew Russel, to Allen, 20th February and 19th June 1917; ANZ, 8666, R21078971 (AD37/22/23), *New Zealand Expeditionary Force: Its provision and maintenance, 1919*, pp. 6-10; Baker, Paul, *For King and Country: New Zealanders, Conscripted and the Great War* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988), pp. 32-34; Crawford, 'New Zealand is being bled to death', pp. 250-265; Sleeman, J. L., 'The Supply of Reinforcements during the War' in Drew, H. T. B (ed.), *The War Effort of New Zealand* (Auckland: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1923), pp. 4-6.

its own reinforcement training system. Although the system was economical, as it only took a small number of officers and NCOs away from divisions, this had to be added to the growing number of men already attached or seconded to other parts of the army, including other training facilities at the army, corps and divisional level. Though impossible to verify the total number of attachments, Third Army records note that, on average, 16.3 and 9.1 percent of officers and other ranks respectively were absent from their battalions between September and December 1916. Even though a proportion of this represented men who were only absent on a temporary basis, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Lawson's report on manpower in early 1917 supports this. He estimated that, on average, 100 men per battalion, or nearly 10 percent of each unit's establishment, were extra-regimentally employed.¹⁰³⁷ While GHQ could have been more accommodating and simply transferred a small number of instructors to each base on a permanent basis, which would have enabled units to request additional reinforcements, Australian, British and Canadian authorities at home were responsible for this. As Smyth bluntly summarised, reinforcements should finish their training in the UK and instructors in France, 'should be special staff instructors, not men just borrowed from battalions'.¹⁰³⁸

Despite the frustration that this caused, the number of officers and NCOs supplied were too small to make a significant impact on reinforcement training by 1917. Considering IBDs process thousands of reinforcements each month, a handful of officers and NCOs were incapable, no matter their skill, to oversee and personally instruct all drafts destined for their divisions.¹⁰³⁹ Whilst officer reinforcements were initially used as temporary instructors in 1915, this source was unreliable due to the speed in which they were processed. Described as, 'fleeting birds of passage', they were liable to be drafted any time after their arrival.¹⁰⁴⁰ As a result, additional instructors were secured from unfit officers and NCOs that were marked as PB or TB. This practice began in 1915 and training staff utilised medical convalescents to

¹⁰³⁷ TNA, WO95/376, Third Army AQMG war diary, September-December 1916; TNA, WO106/363, 'The number and physical categories of men employed out of the fighting area in France (in Continuation of Report dated January 16th. 1917) and on economy of manpower in the fighting areas in France', by Lieutenant-General H. M. Lawson, 8th February 1917.

¹⁰³⁸ AWM, AWM25 947/17 Part 1, Letter from unknown Officer, 2nd December 1916; AWM, AWM25 947/6/495, Letter from Smyth to I ANZAC, 12th March 1917.

¹⁰³⁹ Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 141.

¹⁰⁴⁰ AWM, AWM25 947/8, Memorandum on British training methods of reinforcements, 31st October 1916; TNA, WO95/3957, Report on training at Le Havre and Rouen by Duncan, 1st June 1915.

perform basic instruction. Although all had frontline experience and were noted as adept and keen instructors, there were inevitable difficulties with using this source of manpower.¹⁰⁴¹ As discussed in chapter two and three, many of these men were still recovering from wounds, undergoing a process of rehabilitation or simply too unfit to lead strenuous training exercises. It also created a lack of continuity in instruction, as both PB and TB men were consistently re-examined by standing medical boards. By 1917, it was estimated that 4,750 of these men were re-categorised as fit for duty every six months; thus, a proportion of instructors were consistently transferred back to the frontline and replaced with newly arrived convalescents.¹⁰⁴² Overall, this system guaranteed that the best instructors were never retained for training reinforcements. Despite the educational and training advantages that could be gained by creating a permanent corps of instructors, proficiency was ignored and the value of each officer and NCO was derived by their medical category.

The behaviour and attitude of these NCOs has been earmarked as one of the prominent causes for the Étaples Mutiny in September 1917 by both populist and academic literature. *The Monocled Mutineer*, a sensationalist book published in 1978 with no footnotes and little reference to official documentation, portrayed the IBDs at Étaples as a brutal, inhumane training system that was organised and run by an authoritative and abusive NCO contingent known as ‘the canaries’. Subsequently developed for the small screen by the BBC in 1986, the four part series visualised the supposed brutality of NCOs through verbal abuse, beatings, and petty acts of revenge against reinforcements and convalescents. As Emma Hanna argues, ‘the series was a source of political and historiographical controversy’ and added to the tense relationship between the BBC and the Conservative Government at the time, which, ‘perceived the corporation to be a public institution with an overtly liberal ethos... [and] oversized bureaucracy.’¹⁰⁴³ Unsurprisingly, *The Monocled Mutineer*, along with the claim by an outside advertisement agency that it was historically accurate, was seen as part of this ‘ethos’. The Conservative MP for Cannock and Burntwood, Gerald Howarth, commented that the show rewrote history, whilst Lord Annan described it, ‘as a programme

¹⁰⁴¹ WO95/3957, Report on training Le Havre and Rouen by Duncan, 1st June 1915.

¹⁰⁴² Ibid; WO32/5091, Letter from Haig to War Office, 27th April 1917; TNA, WO95/1055, Canadian Corps AQMG war diary, 31st July 1916; TNA, WO95/3966, IGC war diary, 23rd March 1916.

¹⁰⁴³ Hanna, Emma, *The Great War on the Small Screen: Representing the First World War in Contemporary Britain* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 116-124.

compounded of malevolent falsehood.’¹⁰⁴⁴ Although *The Monocled Mutineer* was hotly debated in the national press, with left and right wing papers taking strikingly different views over the legitimacy of *The Monocled Mutineer*, the programme has helped to create a simplistic and overexaggerated view of what caused the Étaples Mutiny.¹⁰⁴⁵

Yet, aspects of this have been supported within academic literature. Douglas Gill and Gloden Dallas contextualise the behaviour of instructors and the mutiny within the broader field of discipline and morale. Although the arrest of New Zealand gunner A. J. Healy, as well as the accidental shooting of Corporal William Wood, 1/4th Gordon Highlanders, initially triggered the acts of collective indiscipline that took place between the 9th and 15th September, a multitude of reasons led to it. Indeed, the authoritative behaviour of NCO instructors and Military Police was one factor, whilst the strenuous training programme, taught on the sand dunes at Étaples to new reinforcements and convalescents alike, caused anger. There were also a considerable number of ‘bread and butter’ issues affecting reinforcements, such as poor accommodation, rations, pay and limited access to the nearby town of Étaples.¹⁰⁴⁶ More curious is their accusation, based upon anecdotal evidence, memoirs and interviews with veterans, that Australian soldiers contributed to this indiscipline by giving ‘the mutiny a cohesiveness which a riot could not have otherwise attained.’ As mentioned in chapter five, Australian soldiers have often been characterised as ill-disciplined, in part due to their supposed ‘national identity’ that disregarded authority. Though this stereotype has been reinforced by the substantial number of court martials recorded in the AIF, Australian soldiers were not stationed at Étaples in September 1917. Australian IBDs had exchanged places with their Canadian counterparts in May and there are no records of Australian reinforcements arriving at, or leaving for the front from, Étaples in August and September. Though some may have been present, possibly in connection to drafts sent to the ANZAC Corps, they could not have substantively contributed to the breakdown of discipline.¹⁰⁴⁷ Despite this error, Gill and Dallas’ work, reinforced by other historians and the

¹⁰⁴⁴ Hansard, House of Commons debate (HC), 20th November 1986, Vol. 105, cc. 774; Hansard, House of Lords debate (HL), 27th April 1988, Vol. 496, cc. 256.

¹⁰⁴⁵ *Daily Mail*, 13th, 15th and 16th September 1986; *The Guardian*, 16th and 22nd September 1986; Hanna, *The Great War on the Small Screen*, p. 117.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Gill and Dallas, ‘Mutiny at Étaples Base in 1917’, pp. 88-112; Dallas and Gill, *The Unknown Army*, pp. 65-73.

¹⁰⁴⁷ TNA, WO95/4027, Étaples Base war diary, May and August-September 1917; Bowman, *Irish Regiments in the Great War*, p. 21.

oral evidence collected by the Sound Archive at the Imperial War Museum, demonstrates that the training facilities at Étaples was 'a disaster waiting to happen'.¹⁰⁴⁸

However, the mutiny and its causes must be contextualised in relation to the problems faced by and affecting the training system. Despite being overly centralised, the system was, initially, the most economical way to remedy the training of reinforcements with limited resources and time. Indeed, the authoritative nature of NCOs and harsh training regime was not necessarily due to abusive personnel or poor management, but a simple by-product of an overstretched system. Unlike regimental officers and NCOs, instructors at the base were required to assess and train thousands of reinforcements on a monthly basis. Thus, little individualised training could be provided and, without the broader regimental system to guide relations and create cohesion, instructors were likely to come across as detached and authoritative. Furthermore, the harsh training programme was designed to help instructors differentiate between partially and fully trained drafts within a limited timeframe. The former were seen as a significant liability on the battlefield and this method enabled instructors to quickly decide which reinforcements needed extra training.¹⁰⁴⁹ Whilst this led many soldiers to criticise the training as repetitive or too harsh, others, such as Private Gerry Evans, 9th Australian Battalion, were impressed with the instruction, noting it as superior to what they had been taught beforehand.¹⁰⁵⁰

Furthermore, forcing convalescents to undergo the training course at IBDs was a sensible policy. As chapter five demonstrates, an estimated 24.1 percent of drafts were composed of 'recycled reinforcements', who had returned to active duty after a period of convalescence in France or the UK.¹⁰⁵¹ With many recovering from significant wounds and illnesses, a sizable proportion of soldiers, upon arrival at the IBD, would have been out of the line for an extended period of time. For example, Lance Corporal Frank Dyall, 1/6th King's

¹⁰⁴⁸ IWM Sound Archive, William George Bartholomew (1987), Robert Cook (1984), Horace Gaffron (1995), Walter Grove (1988), Edward Hillison (1987), Hugh Little (1980), Francis Edward Sumpter (1986), Charles Ward (1991); Beckett, Ian. F. W., *The Great War, 1914-1918* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), pp. 221-223; Bowman, *Irish Regiments in the Great War*, pp. 158-159; Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front*, p. 188; Hines, *Refilling Haig's Army*, pp. 198-200; Sheffield, Gary, *Forgotten Victory: The First World War Myths and Realities* (London: Headline Publishing, 2002), pp. 156-157.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Dallas and Gill, *The Unknown Army*, p. 72; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 224.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Sound Archive, IWM, Horace Gaffron (1995) and Charles Ward (1991); Frederickson, 'Australian Infantry on the Western Front', pp. 103-104.

¹⁰⁵¹ TNA, WO32/5091, Letter from Haig to War Office, 13th November 1916.

(Liverpool Regiment), was transferred to the UK after being seriously wounded in May 1915 and did not return to France until August 1918.¹⁰⁵² During this period, convalescents undertook physical hardening (therapy) and light duties that focused on rehabilitation. They rarely received refresher training and, as Bill Rawling noted, the rapid change in technology and tactics from 1915 to 1917 meant veterans needed to consistently train to keep pace with developments on the Western Front.¹⁰⁵³ As a result, many convalescents lacked the knowledge and skills needed to resume active duties. For instance, only 23 of the 1,491 veterans returning to Rouen from the UK or French hospitals in December 1915 had knowledge of how to use grenades. During a lecture at the Third Army School in July 1917, Lieutenant-Colonel Somerville stressed that convalescents, no matter their experience, needed significant refresher training with the rifle before they could return to their unit.¹⁰⁵⁴ Therefore, it was a sensible policy to require convalescents from France and the UK to undergo a compulsory training course at IBDs, though the rigid implementation of it can be criticised. Officers should have shown more discretion to those that had only been out the line temporarily and allowed them to return to their units.

Lastly, it must be remembered that the training system had been in place for nearly two years with no disturbances. Whilst harsh, working class citizen soldiers in the BEF were, to some extent, accustomed to hardship through civilian life and the regimentation of the workplace.¹⁰⁵⁵ Thus, poor management of ‘bread and butter’ issues by base staff was clearly an important factor, whilst pressure from the Third Battle of Ypres had magnified the problems affecting the training system. For instance, the pressing need of reinforcements led to the harsh training programme of nine days, including one day of rest, being concentrated

¹⁰⁵² LMM, KRC, KR/2/1, Entry for Lance Corporal Frank Dyal in 1/6th King’s (Liverpool Regiment) casualty book, Vol. I.

¹⁰⁵³ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on London Command Depot, 24th May 1916 and Felixstowe SR Brigade, 28th September 1916; Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare*, p. 97.

¹⁰⁵⁴ IWM, 13802, Reports by Egerton on 5th Middlesex Battalion, 2nd June 1916 and Third Army School, [ND] c. July 1917; TNA, WO95/3957, Report on training at Le Havre and Rouen by Duncan, 1st June 1915; TNA, WO95/3963, Report on training in France by M’Douall, 27th November 1915 and report on training at Rouen by Marrable, 7th December 1915.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Beckett, ‘The nation in arms’, in Beckett, Ian F. W. and Simpson, Keith (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 20; Bourne, John, ‘The British Working Man in Arms’, in Cecil, Hugh and Liddle, Peter, *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced* (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), pp. 336-354.

into five days with all access to nearby towns, such as Étaples, being cancelled.¹⁰⁵⁶ Inevitably, this amplified the strain already placed on reinforcements and probably contributed to the breakdown of discipline. Therefore, the mutiny at Étaples cannot be pinned solely on instructors or the training system. Instead, it can be attributed to a number of factors and tensions that were exacerbated by pressure caused by the Third Battle of Ypres.

The training system was quickly suspended after the Étaples Mutiny and, between September 1917 and January 1918, a new training structure, based upon corps reinforcement camps and divisional wings, was introduced across the imperial army.¹⁰⁵⁷ Whilst the movement of troops continued to be controlled by 3rd Echelon, corps and divisional authorities were in charge of administrative and training, respectively. The OC corps reinforcement camp oversaw base administration and organised the movement of drafts, whilst divisional wings received, administered, and trained infantry reinforcements for their own divisions. A similar process was operated for supporting arms, which had specific depots at, or near, corps reinforcement camps. In total, divisional wings held reinforcements equating to 10 percent of a unit's establishment and, staff, composed of divisional officers and NCOs, created a training programme that aimed, 'to ensure no man goes to his battalion until up to the standard set by the CO'.¹⁰⁵⁸

Although Dallas, Gill and Hines have argued that this transition was due to the mutiny, the evidence demonstrates that it merely accelerated a pre-planned move organised by GHQ.¹⁰⁵⁹ The Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp had been officially authorised on 5th September 1917 and, 10 days later, had already absorbed all divisional schools and the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Canadian Entrenching Battalions to form the nucleus of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisional Wings.¹⁰⁶⁰ The speed and timing of these changes demonstrate that this decision had been taken before the mutiny began and, in fact, was based on a system that

¹⁰⁵⁶ TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 22nd August 1917.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ibid, 4th February 1918.

¹⁰⁵⁸ AWM, AWM4 33/2/1, History of 3rd Australian Divisional Wing, 1917-1918; LAC, RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 5047, file 913, Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp war diary, 5th September 1917; TNA, WO95/1015, Australian Corps Reinforcement Camp war diary, 11th September 1917; TNA, WO95/1056, Memorandum on handling Canadian reinforcements, 7th June 1918; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 245-249.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Dallas and Gill, *The Unknown Army*, pp. 74-76; Hines, *Refilling Haig's Army*, pp. 200, 221-222.

¹⁰⁶⁰ LAC, RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 5047, file 913, Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp war diary, 5th and 15th September 1917; TNA, WO95/43, 3rd Echelon (Canadian Section) war diary, 4th September 1917.

had already been tried and tested. Indeed, the concept of the corps reinforcement camps had begun in preparation for the Battle of the Somme in June 1916 and, by early 1917, had developed into a devolved reinforcement training system. Originally, reinforcement camps, created at either the corps or divisional level, were designed to overcome specific problems of supplying reinforcements in the field. For example, the 56th (1st London) Division created a small reinforcement camp at their divisional railhead and used it as a resting and collection point.¹⁰⁶¹ III Corps, under the direction of Third Army, instructed divisions to create divisional reinforcement camps in August. Capable of holding 400 reinforcements and 150 remounts, it enabled staff to organise drafts and inspect their equipment before sending them to the front.¹⁰⁶² During the following month, the Canadian Corps created a central reinforcement camp at Val de Maison, which was important for navigating the deep and narrow front of the Somme battlefield. The road network up to the frontline was limited and, with divisions constantly moving, it was easier to centrally collect and guide drafts up to their units.¹⁰⁶³

Yet, over the winter of 1916 and 1917, these were developed from staging posts into miniature training organisations for partially-trained reinforcements. This concept originated in February 1916 from GOC Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Edwin Alderson, who noted that the lack of trained reinforcements could be resolved by posting partially-trained reinforcements to the corps for training. Although accepted by the War Office, a lack of accommodation meant that this process only began in October 1916. Initially, 150 were maintained above the establishment of each battalion and, in January 1917, it was increased to 200. These reinforcements were kept until fully trained and then used to cover wastage. Once absorbed, the process was repeated.¹⁰⁶⁴

Whilst this represented another layer of reinforcement training within the imperial army, there was a logic to it. During the Somme Campaign in 1916, it was typical for the combat effectiveness of each division to drop after each battle. As discussed in chapter four, high casualty rates had led to a loss of experienced personnel and, with little time between periods of service on the frontline, battalions were forced absorb a large number of

¹⁰⁶¹ TNA, WO95/2936, 56th (1st London) Division war diary, 24th June 1916.

¹⁰⁶² TNA, WO95/684, Memorandum on reinforcement camps by III Corps, 12th August 1916.

¹⁰⁶³ TNA, WO95/1055, Canadian Corps AQMG war diary, 7th September 1916.

¹⁰⁶⁴ TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 9th October 1916; TNA, WO95/43, 3rd Echelon (Canadian Section) war diary, 3rd July 1917; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 243.

‘undigested reinforcements’ before returning to active operations. As Haig noted, most divisions went into combat with, ‘men who have been hurried into their battalions at the last moment. These men, besides being inadequately trained for the fight, are strange to their units. They neither know their leaders nor do leaders know them.’¹⁰⁶⁵ The 34th Division, which had been withdrawn from the frontline on 1st July after suffering an estimated 6,906 casualties, participated in the assault on Bazentin Ridge two weeks later. Despite the temporary exchange of the 102nd and 103rd Brigades with the 111th and 112th Brigades of the 37th Division, the 101st Brigade had to be reconstituted from fresh reinforcements at the last moment. The 10th Lincoln Regiment received 10 officers and 475 other ranks on the 11th and 12th July, whilst the 15th and 16th Royal Scots absorbed 300 and 299 other ranks, respectively.¹⁰⁶⁶

To overcome this, Haig proposed that each infantry battalion should be maintained at 100 soldiers above establishment. Similar to the policy adopted by the Canadian Corps, these reinforcements would be housed and trained by their battalion and, prior to active operations, withdrawn to the rear. This, alongside the small nucleus of leaders and specialists left behind by battalions, as demanded in *SS135, Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action*, created a small pool of reinforcements who had trained together. Whilst it could not cover substantial losses, it could foster a strong *esprit de corps* in reinforcements before they were posted to their battalions. It enabled men to train alongside veterans and specialists from their unit which, as discussed earlier, was vital for resolving differences and becoming integral members of their new ‘military community’.¹⁰⁶⁷ Though Haig was not clear if he intended to use partially-trained reinforcements like the Canadian Corps, it is reasonable to assume that was his intention. A sizable stream of partially-trained reinforcements, who had completed an equivalent of nine weeks’ worth of training, had been drafted to the

¹⁰⁶⁵ TNA, WO32/5091, Letter from Haig to War Office, 21st November 1916; Boff, *Winning and Losing on the Western Front*, p.44; Campbell, ‘The divisional experience in the C.E.F’, p. 243.

¹⁰⁶⁶ TNA WO95/684, III Corps AQMG war diary, 3rd-12th July 1916; Miles, Wilfred, *Military operations, France and Belgium 1916, Vol. II* (London: Macmillan, 1938), pp. 97, 102, 169 and 186-187.

¹⁰⁶⁷ TNA, WO32/5091, Letter from Haig to War Office, 13th and 21st November 1916; *SS135, Instructions for the Training of Divisions for Offensive Action* (London: HMSO, 1916), pp. 78-79

imperial army since August 1916 and both the 1st ANZAC and 56th (1st London) Divisions had noted the need to train these recruits from December 1916.¹⁰⁶⁸

Yet, this policy produced two different results for the BEF and CEF. For the British, the success of the model was, at best, limited, due to the growing manpower crisis and haphazard implementation of it by corps and divisions. Conversely, the continual supply of Canadian manpower throughout most of 1917, as well as the homogeneous organisation and structure of the Canadian Corps, produced excellent results. Although difficult to gauge how many partially-trained reinforcements were received by British battalions, it appears some units were stronger than their establishment in January 1917, with the 12th London Regiment (The Rangers) and 8th Middlesex Regiment having 1,120 and 1,117 all ranks in January and February 1917, respectively.¹⁰⁶⁹ Yet, with the resumption of active operations in April, the infantry had fallen 31,409 below their establishment by May.¹⁰⁷⁰ This did not improve and though the War Office were able to send 377,443 reinforcements between March and October 1917, British divisions had suffered 386,678 casualties during the same period.¹⁰⁷¹ Thus, the policy of retaining an additional 10 percent of partially-trained reinforcements with every battalion was inconsequential, as the manpower crisis made this impossible from March 1917.

Conversely, the manpower situation had improved for the CEF to such an extent that, by April 1917, GOC Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie, requested that no partially-trained reinforcements should be drafted whilst fully trained reinforcements were available. Despite suffering 10,602 casualties at the Battle of Vimy Ridge that month, the radical reorganisation of the Canadian reinforcement system in the UK had significantly improved the flow of reinforcements to France. Nevertheless, this policy remained in place until August 1917 and, overall, Richard Holt estimates that the Canadian Corps received 14,300 partially-trained reinforcements, equating to roughly 26 percent of all reinforcements during this period. Although this may be an overestimation, as only 14.5 percent of all drafts

¹⁰⁶⁸ AWM, AWM4 1/66/2, 'AIF Depots in UK' by Moore; AWM, AWM25 947/6/495, Letter from Smyth to 1st ANZAC, 12th March 1917; TNA, WO95/2936, 56th (1st London) Division AQMG war diary, 15th December 1916; TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 14th and 20th June 1916; TNA, WO95/5460, 3rd Training Reserve Battalion regimental digest, January-May 1917.

¹⁰⁶⁹ TNA, WO95/2936, 56th (1st London) Division AQMG war diary, 1st January and 1st February 1917.

¹⁰⁷⁰ TNA, WO95/5091, Letter from Haig to War Office, 27th April 1917.

¹⁰⁷¹ Ibid, Memorandum on reinforcements for BEF, [ND] c. November 1917; TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, March-October 1917.

received by the 3rd Canadian Division were recorded as partially-trained, it still represents a significant number that were organised and trained by Canadian battalions. Unlike the BEF, its favourable manpower situation enabled it to adhere to its reinforcement policy far more closely.¹⁰⁷²

Despite the difficulties faced by the BEF, these policies led to the creation of *ad hoc* training formations across the imperial army in 1917. For instance, Third Army prepared accommodation in every division for an extra 10 percent of infantry personnel in November 1916 and the 56th (1st London) Division, as part of the former, had created a 'divisional training battalion' by December. In March 1917, Third Army standardised the numerous divisional training organisations that had been created and replaced them with a central corps depot that was comprised of training battalions for each division. Furthermore, GOC Third Army, Lieutenant-General Sir Edmund Allenby, recommended that each division post six officers and twelve NCOs to these units to train newly arrived reinforcements.¹⁰⁷³ However, each formation within the BEF had their own reinforcement arrangements. For instance, 5th Division, upon arrival at XIII Corps in January 1917, followed the latter's lead and created three brigade training centres. As part of a wider First Army policy, it aimed to provide additional instruction to all reinforcements who had never been to the frontline.¹⁰⁷⁴ These *ad hoc* training units were recognised in SS152 under the umbrella term of corps reinforcement camps. Broadly, their function was to train reinforcements in musketry and continue the instruction of reinforcements who had not left for their units.¹⁰⁷⁵ This was not implemented by all, however. For instance, 4th Division, as part of XVII Corps, had not attached any officers or NCOs to Third Army Corps Depot by March 1917. Instead, they sporadically posted specialist instructors from battalions during active operations. Whilst this could have been offset by using instructional staff at the 4th Divisional School of instruction, it was located at Oisemont, far behind the frontline.¹⁰⁷⁶ Even this deviation was irrelevant, as Allenby

¹⁰⁷² LAC, RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 4856, file 149-150, 3rd Canadian Division AQMG war diary, January-August 1917; LAC, RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 4857, file 150-151, 3rd Canadian Division AQMG war diary, August 1917; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 244; Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, p. 265.

¹⁰⁷³ TNA, WO95/360, Third Army conference, 11th November 1916; TNA, WO95/2936, 'Instructions as to the disposal of surplus personnel and reinforcements during offensive operations', 19th March 1917.

¹⁰⁷⁴ TNA, WO95/1518, 5th Division AQMG war diary, 29th December 1916, 1st January and 6th May 1917; Hine, *Refilling Haig's Army*, p. 189.

¹⁰⁷⁵ SS152, *Instructions for the Training of the British Armies in France 1917*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁷⁶ TNA, WO95/1450, 4th Division billeting list and instructions, 18th and 30th March 1917.

subsequently abandoned his attempts of standardisation. In May 1917, he announced that the corps depot system was no longer essential and, from June, it was up to individual corps to retain or abolish these training formations.¹⁰⁷⁷

Whilst the Canadian Corps began in a similar manner to the BEF, it had reorganised under Currie by July 1917. In December 1916, the 3rd Canadian Division had created three draft battalions that corresponded to each brigade, whilst the 2nd Canadian Division had organised the 2nd Canadian Division Draft Regiment. By June 1917, the latter had combined with the 2nd Canadian Divisional School of Instruction to create the 2nd Canadian Divisional Training School, which handled all reinforcements and training courses for the division.¹⁰⁷⁸ Yet, in July 1917, after one month in command, Currie standardised the competing methods of training across the corps. He encouraged each division to adopt a training centre of three draft training battalions, which were to be located with their corresponding divisional school. This would economise on staff, instructors and training facilities and help to develop *esprit de corps* amongst reinforcements, who were more likely to be trained by officers and NCOs from their battalion. Training centres also had to present a training syllabus that included, drill, musketry, bayonet fighting, grenade practice, Lewis gunnery and practical exercises for corps approval. Although other divisions followed this model, the 2nd Canadian Division was given dispensation to continue its training practices, with some alterations, after they were proven to be successful and capable of disseminating corps doctrine.¹⁰⁷⁹ The CO 4th Canadian Brigade, Brigadier-General Robert Rennie, noted that, 'All Battalion Commanders in this Brigade speak very highly of the work being carried out by the 2nd Divisional Training Battalion, and consider that the efficiency of their Battalions is greatly increased thereby.'¹⁰⁸⁰

Thus, the transfer to a divisional wing structure between September 1917 and January 1918 was not a new endeavour, but one built on experience and, to some extent, pre-existing training infrastructure.¹⁰⁸¹ Undoubtedly, it was, at this point in the Great War, the best means

¹⁰⁷⁷ TNA, WO95/363, 'Corps depot organisation' by Third Army, 14th and 24th May 1917.

¹⁰⁷⁸ LAC, RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 4856, file 148, 3rd Canadian Division AQMG war diary, 7th December 1916; Campbell, 'The divisional experience in the C.E.F', pp. 292-294; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 243-244 and 312.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Campbell, 'The divisional experience in the C.E.F', pp. 312-315.

¹⁰⁸⁰ LAC, RG9-III-D-1, Vol. 4709, folder 43, file 3, Routine order by Major General H.E. Burstall, 2nd Canadian Division, 19th October 1917, quoted in Campbell, 'The divisional experience in the C.E.F', p. 323.

¹⁰⁸¹ TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, 4th February 1918.

of providing reinforcement training for several reasons. Firstly, the Canadian Corps had demonstrated the excellent results that could be obtained from this devolved method and, secondly, large, centralised training systems were no longer the most economical way of training reinforcements due to the reduced numbers. This approach also fitted into the broader belief held by GHQ that COs were responsible for training all personnel under their command.¹⁰⁸² Therefore, the adoption of divisional wings granted greater control of reinforcement training to divisional commanders and returned a sizable number of officers and NCOs to their battalions.

Despite a common policy and reinforcement training structure, British and Canadian results continued to differ until the armistice. Unsurprisingly, the BEF continually failed to implement a standardised organisation and training programme within the divisional wing structure. As Jonathan Boff notes, *SS152*, designed to disseminate a common doctrine and system within the imperial army, failed to change the decentralised culture of the British Army. As a result, divisional commanders were able to pursue whatever training programme they wished at divisional wings, whilst corps and army commanders were unwilling or unable to intervene. Although difficult to assess how divisional commanders viewed and utilised divisional wings, the quantity of resources and personnel they invested into them demonstrates their commitment to reinforcement training.¹⁰⁸³ The GOC 7th Division, Major-General T. H. Shoebridge, assigned 17 officers and 42 NCOs to training companies, with the divisional musketry and gas officers overseeing training. They would assess the capabilities of drafts within 24 hours of arrival, and divide them between trained, partially-trained and untrained companies, which had their own syllabus. The GOC New Zealand Division, Major-General Sir Andrew Russel, also appointed a large training staff of 12 officers and 37 NCOs, whilst GOC 34th Division, Major-General Lothian Nicholson, created an extensive six week training programme for reinforcements. Conversely, the GOC 4th Division, Major-General L. J. Lipsett, posted no officers and NCOs to his divisional wing and, seemingly, saw it as an advanced staging camp. Unsurprisingly, he was never challenged over this. The GOC Third Army, General Sir Julian Byng, merely reminded Lipsett and other divisional commanders in

¹⁰⁸² Frederickson, 'Australian Infantry on the Western Front', p. 107.

¹⁰⁸³ Boff, *Winning and Losing on the Western Front*, pp. 59-68.

March 1918 that the number of instructors needed at divisional wings depended upon the number of reinforcements present.¹⁰⁸⁴

Interestingly, Jonathan Boff argues there was no practical alternative to uneven training in 1918, as it was imperative for commanders to train their troops for battle.¹⁰⁸⁵ Yet, the Canadian Corps defies this observation. Each Canadian divisional wing had an establishment of 35 NCOs to teach core subjects, such as musketry and wiring, and were drawn from their corresponding division.¹⁰⁸⁶ This, combined with the corps practice of approving training syllabuses, demonstrates that it was possible to co-ordinate reinforcement training on a systematic basis. In part, this was due to the unique position of the Canadian Corps within the imperial army. Unlike the BEF, which frequently rotated divisions across its corps, the composition of the Canadian Corps remained undisturbed, as its national homogeneity was considered imperative to retaining the confidence and support of the Canadian government. When Haig, as part of his response to the German Spring Offensive in March 1918, detached all four Canadian Divisions from the Canadian Corps, pressure from Currie and the Minister of OMFC, Sir Albert Edward Kemp, saw three divisions returned within two weeks.¹⁰⁸⁷ As a result, Currie and his divisional commanders had a structural stability that was absent in the BEF, which enabled them to permanently influence and shape their training system.

Yet, this structure by no means guaranteed success, as the Australian Corps did not maximise the benefits this created for its divisional wings. Unlike its Canadian counterparts, Australian Divisions were instructed in November 1917 to supply two officers and NCOs as instructors to their corresponding divisional wing, which was a continuation of methods practiced at the Le Havre base. No systematic training programme was created or authorised at the corps level and some, such as CO 1st Australian Wing, Major E. B. Ayris, admitted that training was kept short, so reinforcements had, 'as much freedom and leisure as can be

¹⁰⁸⁴ TNA, WO95/370, Third Army war diary, 26th February 1918; TNA, WO95/1633, 'Creation of Divisional Wing' by 7th Division, September 1917; TNA, WO95/2435, 34th Division war diary and training syllabus, October 1917; TNA, WO95/4190, New Zealand Reinforcement Camp war diary, March 1918.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Boff, *Winning and Losing on the Western Front*, p. 68.

¹⁰⁸⁶ LAC, RG9-III-D-3, Vol. 5047, file 913, Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp war diary, 5th and 15th September 1917; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 247.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force*, pp. 114-115 and 379-381; Stewart, *The Embattled General*, p. 226.

spared before proceeding to their units.’ It is not surprising, therefore, that Australian divisions were reportedly failing to provide consistent or systematic training in their divisional wings between November 1917 and March 1918.¹⁰⁸⁸

Admittedly, the Australian Corps faced two problems that may have influenced this. Firstly, the corps was belatedly created in November 1917 and did not have the longevity, experience and stability that had been built up in the Canadian Corps over the last two years. Secondly, the Australian Corps faced a bleak manpower crisis after the failure of both conscription plebiscites in December 1916 and October 1917. One of its five divisions had to be used as a ‘depot’ division until March 1918 and, by October, the average strength of each division had fallen from 12,718 to 8,017, respectively. Although the Canadian Corps had, during the same period, dropped from an average strength of 13,752 to 9,493, the belated introduction of conscription in August 1917 ensured their supply of reinforcements. Whilst this likely influenced the disposition of Australian divisional wings, its organisation was clearly inadequate compared to the Canadian Corps.¹⁰⁸⁹

Regardless, Currie’s command was the critical factor needed to utilise the Canadian Corps unique organisational advantage. He excelled above his British and Dominion counterparts as he understood how, as a corps commander, to standardise reinforcement training within a devolved system. Through consultation with his divisional commanders, Currie was able to establish and maintain a homogenous training system that not only preserved divisional initiative but produced consistent results from July 1917. Thus, the adoption of the divisional wing structure in September 1917 was not new, but a continuation of reinforcement training policy that had been used and refined by the Canadian Corps since November 1916.¹⁰⁹⁰

British divisional wings became moribund as training formations after the German Spring Offensive in March 1918. As discussed in chapter five, reinforcement training was

¹⁰⁸⁸ AWM, AWM4 33/2/1, Australian Corps Reinforcement Camp war diary, November 1917 – May 1918 and history of 1st and 2nd Australian Divisional Wing, 1917-1918.

¹⁰⁸⁹ TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General war diary, March and October 1918; TNA, WO95/1015, Australian Corps Reinforcement Camp war diary, 6th November 1917; Bou and Dennis, *The Australian Imperial Force*, pp. 34-35 and 60-65; Dennis, Patrick M., *Reluctant Warriors: Canadian Conscripts and the Great War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2017), pp. 98-100, 182, 221, 224-225 and 230.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Campbell, ‘The divisional experience in the C.E.F.’, p. 325; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, p. 247.

immediately suspended as divisional wings were needed as *ad hoc* battalions to fill the numerous gaps emerging in the British line. Though a proportion of reinforcements continued onto their divisional wings on quieter parts of the line, most were retained at British bases until they could be directly drafted to their units. This, as well as the sharp influx of drafts from the UK, led to a sharp drop in the quality of training provided.¹⁰⁹¹ In April, First Army reported two drafts sent to the 8th Durham Light Infantry, composed of 217 men from the ASC and Inland Water Transport, that had little to no training upon arrival.¹⁰⁹²

Though some British commanders, such as GOC First Army, General Sir Henry Horne, considered how to best use corps reinforcement camps and divisional wings in the future, GHQ forestalled this by abolishing both formations in the BEF. They reverted to a simplified version of the test and train system and drafts, upon arrival at IBDs, were processed and forwarded onto one of the two nearby training camps. Staff tested recruits on basic musketry, bombing, Lewis gunnery and rapid wiring and, providing there were no major issues, they were sent onto their units via corps and divisional reception camps, which were located at their respective railheads. This process was completed by June and, considering the pressing need for reinforcements, tests were probably rushed. It does not, however, support the comments made by the Official Historian, James E. Edmonds, that drafts were devoid of tactical sense. Whilst the lack of training was exacerbated by the transition to open warfare, which required a different set of skills, the BEF had continued to perform well against the German Army. In part, this was due to the continued arrival of recycled veterans, who formed an estimated 25 percent of all drafts in 1918. Yet, the training system in France contributed to this, as it provided quick, corrective training to reinforcements, which allowed units to continue fighting.¹⁰⁹³

Australian, Canadian and New Zealand divisional wings never came under direct threat during the German Spring Offensive and were unaffected. Whilst the Australian Corps kept

¹⁰⁹¹ See chapter five.

¹⁰⁹² TNA, WO95/187, First Army 'A and Q' summary, 26th April 1918.

¹⁰⁹³ TNA, WO95/26, Adjutant General's war diary, 25th May and 15th June 1918; TNA, WO95/187, First Army 'A and Q' summary, 25th April 1918; TNA, WO95/1880, Memorandum on Reinforcement Training Camps by GHQ, 15th July 1918; Edmonds, J. E., *Military Operations, France and Belgium 1918*, Vol. V. (HMSO: London, 1947), p. 575.

their corps reinforcement camp and divisional wings near to the frontline, the Canadian Corps withdrew their reserve formations to Aubin-Saint-Vaast in the rear, where it remained until the armistice. Drafts continued to receive training and when the Canadian Corps relocated to another part of the line, reinforcements were posted to nearby staging areas under the control of the Canadian Corps Reinforcement Camp.¹⁰⁹⁴

Unlike other aspects of the Great War, pre-war planners had not anticipated the need to train reinforcements within an active theatre. Yet, GHQ and, more specifically, the IGC, were able to quickly create a standardised test and train system that could be integrated into the reinforcement system. It was able to balance speed with the need for proficient replacements by providing corrective training to recruits deemed inefficient in key skills. Though its impact was restricted, as the crux of the problem laid with reinforcement training in the UK and Dominions, the system provided systematic training to recruits, who contributed towards the BEF's tactical proficiency. Its contribution to the Étaples Mutiny of 1917 has been overstated and, despite the poor atmosphere that permeated the base, it was a series of 'bread and butter' issues that triggered the acts of collective indiscipline.

Though this system had been implemented by British authorities to support the whole imperial army, the CEF were undermined by imperial actions. Unlike the AIF and NZEF, who deployed on the Western Front in 1916 and were allocated an IBD for each division, the Canadian Corps were provided with scant support. Initially allocated a British GBD to process reinforcements for the 1st Canadian Division, British authorities forced the CGBD, formed in September 1915 upon the arrival of the 2nd Canadian Division, to supervise training for both formations. Despite attempts by staff to request support from Canadian and imperial authorities, the CGBD were forced to process, assess, and train reinforcements equivalent to what four IBDs and one GBD would handle for other formations. The average number of reinforcements trained was 544 percent larger than elsewhere and imperial conduct on this matter was culpable. Despite this, the Canadian Corps developed a devolved training system that received and taught partially-trained reinforcements from the UK. The GOC Canadian Corps, Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie, was able to utilise the corps' homogenous

¹⁰⁹⁴ TNA, WO95/1015, Australian Corps Reinforcement Camp war diary, August 1916 - October 1918; TNA, WO95/4190, New Zealand Reinforcement Camp war diary, December 1917 – November 1918; Holt, *Filling the Ranks*, pp. 248-249.

organisation to establish and maintain a standardised training system that produced consistent results.

Its effectiveness was so apparent, that GHQ incorporated and disseminated it across the remainder of the imperial army. Corps reinforcements camps and divisional wings were created between September 1917 and January 1918, which granted divisional commanders control over reinforcement training. Though the decentralised culture of the imperial army had led to mixed results, as Australian, British and New Zealand divisions allocated varying amounts of resources to these formations, it demonstrates the cross-pollination of ideas between military formations of the British Empire. Innovation and organisational expertise were not the preserve of imperial officers, who were, in many cases, willing to accept and adopt policy and practices that were of obvious benefit to the armed forces. Though Haig demonstrated this virtue, it was Currie who created the standardised reinforcement training model adopted across the imperial army between 1917 and 1918.

Conclusion

The British Army experienced a series of profound shocks during the South African War, which prompted civil and military authorities to seriously consider the premise of a reinforcement policy. The fundamental questions this raised, which included the size and role of the reserve, the ability to expand the regular army, and the means of providing drafts, led to the first reinforcement system in 1908, which was composed of the TF and the SR. Created by the Liberal Secretary of State for War, Richard Haldane, these formations were designed to expand and sustain an expeditionary force, respectively. Despite the TF's flaws, including its sudden shift from wartime expansion to home defence, these institutions formed the bedrock of administrative and military machinery needed by the British Army to prosecute an industrial war.

Between 1914 and 1918, the reinforcement system was rapidly expanded to meet the demands of attrition, and provided the reinforcements needed by the BEF to maintain operations until November 1918. This represented a seismic shift in military thinking and practice, which saw, in less than twenty years, the creation of Britain's first reinforcement policy and its transformation from supporting a regular army of 250,000, to one that could sustain a continental army of millions. Unlike what Alison Hine and, more broadly, proponents of the 'learning curve' have claimed, this process was far from a smooth, gradual transition that contributed towards the professionalisation of the British Army.¹⁰⁹⁵ Its success was erratic and, at times, disastrous, which put the BEF under severe pressure and, in the winter of 1914 and spring of 1918, pushed it to the brink of collapse.

This was caused by the reinforcement system, and the policy that guided it, being formed of inter-connected parts across multiple countries, which represented the logistical flow of manpower from the UK to the Western Front.¹⁰⁹⁶ Each part had its own responsibilities and came under the authority of different military institutions. Due to the many complications and difficulties experienced in each part, however, it had serious repercussions across the entire system. The reinforcement system in the UK, which was under War Office control, held

¹⁰⁹⁵ Hine, Alison, *Refilling Haig's Armies: The Replacement of British Infantry Casualties on the Western Front, 1916-1918* (Warwick: Helion, 2018), p. 297.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Holt, Richard, *Filling the Ranks: Manpower in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), p. 169.

the primary position within the chain due to its responsibility in sourcing recruits to cover wastage. Though the British Army had a pre-existing reinforcement system in place, the Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, threw this into disarray through mass recruitment and expansion. He shelved the sensible advice proffered by the Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Henry Sclater, who recommended a controlled expansion of the SR and ER, in favour of a politically great, but disorganising action; the formation of the New Armies. Spurred on by high wastage, waning recruitment and legal precedents, Kitchener compartmentalised the reinforcement system into three competing parts by creating dedicated reserve formations for the regulars, TF and New Armies. The Territorial second and third line were designed to take over home defence and drafting duties, respectively. Yet, due to the Territorial Pledge and its home defence role, the TF reinforcement system was locked into a series of drafting crises. It had created artificial drafting barriers and reduced the TF's capacity to produce trained reinforcements, and attempts to overturn the former in Parliament had been rejected in May 1915.

Whilst this locked the dysfunctional TF reinforcement system in place until the Military Service Acts of 1916, the Second and Local Reserves were created by June 1915 to provide a dedicated stream of reinforcements for the New Armies. Though these units provided an initial impetus to recruitment and made service in the reserve attractive, especially as enthusiasm for service in 'Pals' battalions could be resurrected within the Local Reserve, it led to growing competition over a smaller number of recruits. Accordingly, all reserve units began to dwindle in strength and, at times, became empty shells, which disrupted the output of drafts. As a result, the distinct identities of the regular and New Armies, as outlined in Peter Simkins' 'Four Armies' concept, merged in 1915, as both the Second and Local Reserve ran out of recruits and regularly relied upon the SR to make up the shortfall.¹⁰⁹⁷

Despite attempts to improve recruitment yields via conscription, which the War Office had placed great faith in to resolve the emerging manpower and drafting crises, the Battle of the Somme had demonstrated the critical failings of the *ad hoc* reinforcement system. It could not provide the volume of reinforcements needed, which led to numerous postings and

¹⁰⁹⁷ Simkins, Peter, 'The Four Armies, 1914-1918' in Chandler, David. G and Beckett, Ian F. W. (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 235-255.

transfers at home and abroad. Though this represented an estimated average of 8.8 percent of drafts in the BEF throughout 1916, some battalions, such as the 1st Somerset Light Infantry, received higher proportions. This led to the creation of the TR in September 1916, which represented the first effective reform implemented since the outbreak of war. It rationalised the reinforcement system and affirmed the primary role of the SR, ER and Territorial third line in providing drafts. It amalgamated the Second and Local Reserve into the TR, which created a generic manpower pool that supported all regiments.

In spite of claims within the historiography that these reforms ‘nationalised’ the British Army and broke down localised regimental identities, the TR was a pragmatic compromise to meet the challenges of industrial war.¹⁰⁹⁸ It provided the War Office with the flexibility needed to handle unexpected manpower demands, as well as preserve the regimental system upon a regional model. Recruits were conscripted and distributed by Home Commands and, as the TR were included within this, soldiers were drawn from counties or regions that each regiment were affiliated too. Though this was dependent upon several variables, including the geographical composition of Home Commands, data from four casualty books confirm that several regiments, including the 1/6th King’s (Liverpool Regiment) and 1st Somerset Light Infantry, were able to transcend from a local to regional identity as intended.¹⁰⁹⁹ Even if men could not always forge meaningful bonds over these ties, as shown by the somewhat empty notion of a South-Western identity, it demonstrated a clear commitment by the War Office to preserve regimental identities.

Despite the substantive improvements made to the reinforcement system, the deteriorating manpower situation undermined their usefulness. Conscription yields substantially dropped after the Battle of the Somme and attempts to resolve this were unsuccessful until December 1917, as the new Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, continued

¹⁰⁹⁸ French, David, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People c.1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 277-278; Fuller, J. G., *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1991), pp. 43-44; Hine, *Refilling Haig’s Armies*, pp. 142-144; Hughes, Clive, ‘The new Armies’ in Beckett, Ian F. W. and Simpson, Keith (eds), *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 99-126; Strachan, Hew, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 207-208.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Hine, *Refilling Haig’s Armies*, pp. 298-299; McCartney, Helen, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 58-74.

to delegate these decisions to powerless, *ad hoc* committees. The creation of the MNS and the Manpower Committee in November and December 1917 respectively, were important milestones towards the establishment of a strategic manpower policy, which distributed recruits according to national priorities. Historians have questioned this, which placed the army below the Royal Navy, air services, ship building, aircraft and tank production and the provision of raw materials. Yet, this did not constitute an agenda by Lloyd George to withhold manpower from the BEF. Though he desired to curb any prospect of the Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, launching a fresh offensive in the spring, the decision to allocate 250,000 'A' and 'B' men to the British Army had only occurred after the Minister of National Service, Sir Auckland Geddes, had reported upon the bleak manpower situation. Even though this was exacerbated by the collapse in civil-military relations over the winter of 1917, the government were forced to choose between maintaining industrial output or restoring the army. There was a broad consensus within the War Cabinet that Britain needed to conserve its strength until 1919. Industrial output would increase the mechanised firepower available to, and compensate for the drop in, infantry on the Western Front, whilst the AEF could organise, train and deploy an operational army on the Western Front.¹¹⁰⁰

This created unsolvable dilemmas for the War Office in 1917, as they could not consider the organisation of the British Army until these questions had been answered. It did, however, lead them to search for new sources of manpower. This led to the conscription of youths, aged 18, in January 1917, who were to be organised and trained until they reached the drafting age of 19. They were considered an emergency reserve that could be drawn upon in a crisis and this conveys the anxiety felt within military circles, as Britain was the only nation in the British Empire to conscript males below the age of 20. Their immediate call up had a substantial effect on the demographic of recruits. It overwhelmed the smaller stream of men aged 19 and over, as the majority were locked up in protected occupations. Unlike the chaos of earlier years, however, the War Office approached this problem with exceptional pragmatism and separated these recruits into Young Soldier and Graduate Battalions, which had been converted from the moribund TR. They were supported by Junior and Senior TR battalions which, in an attempt to enhance the number of recruits available for the frontline,

¹¹⁰⁰ Woodward, David R., 'Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army of Men prior to the German offensive of 21 March 1918?', *The Historical Journal*, 27:1 (1984), pp. 241-252.

provided specialised physical training for underdeveloped youths and men of low medial categories. This claim was recognised by the War Cabinet, who agreed to provide an additional 120,000 'A' youths for the army in 1918.

This reserve, estimated to be 120,000 in December 1917, was instrumental during the German Spring Offensive. Their arrival overseas, alongside a growing number of soldiers categorised as 'B', prevented the BEF from collapsing in March and April 1918. It also provided Geddes with the time needed to enact an emergency comb out of industry. Though 313,987 recruits were generated for the army by June, this had destabilised industrial, raw material and agricultural output in the UK, and undermined morale across the Home Front. Not only does it demonstrate the false dichotomy that industry could have easily provided more men in 1917, but it drew attention to the large number of soldiers, graded 'B' and below, who were ineffectively used within the British Army at home. Even though most 'A' men had been withdrawn prior to March 1918, there was a large number of 'B' soldiers, held in superfluous roles at home, who could have been sent overseas or exchanged for fit men in industry. It is clear, however, that Britain had reached its manpower ceiling in December 1917. A reconfiguration of manpower within industry and the army could have generated additional recruits in the short term, but Britain had reached its limit. The search for recruits in 1918 had shattered its manpower ceiling and had the war continued, the prospects for 1919 would have been bleak.

Though the reinforcement system in the UK was the primary component, as it was their responsibility to source and deliver manpower to the BEF, its counterpart on the Western Front was critical to facilitating this. The movement of drafts to the frontline was governed by a logistical 'pull' system, where the Adjutant General controlled the movement of manpower and pulled them across from IBDs and, through demands, the UK. Despite the great difficulties in this process, as well as the confusion over casualty reporting in 1914 and 1915, GHQ had swiftly altered administrative practices and the organisation of the reinforcement system to rectify this. This increased the speed and rate in which reinforcements were called up, and sent to, the frontline, though these efforts were somewhat marred by entrenching battalions, which had been designed to utilise reinforcements as a labour force on the Lines of Communication.

Despite this success, Haig undermined the BEF through his quasi-strategy of attrition, as he failed to understand how the reinforcements system and its limitations affected operational tempo. It took up to three weeks for drafts to arrive on the frontline and, with only a small proportion of reinforcements held in IBDs, the reinforcement system could not sustain the high operational tempo he demanded during the Battle of the Somme and the Third Battle of Ypres. Unable to replace the scale of losses sustained on the frontline, Haig micromanaged his manpower assets and regularly rotated his divisions to maintain momentum. Not only did this undermined any drive, as this process took several days to complete, but formations spent less time in reserve, which led to reinforcements being rushed into battalions at the last minute. This created instability and, without the time to absorb and integrate reinforcements through training, which was needed to resolve differences between long standing and new members of battalions, it would undermine morale and internal cohesion. This, in turn, reduced their combat effectiveness and led to heavier casualties on the battlefield. Divisional commanders raised these issues throughout 1917 and stressed the need for extended periods of rest and training between engagements, which could only have been possible under a 'step-by-step' operational approach. Though Haig had recognised the importance of this in late 1916, his stubborn conviction that the German Army was near to collapse ensured that methodological, limited advances that promoted these practices, were never adopted.¹¹⁰¹

This was not a universal experience across the imperial army, however. Firstly, the organisational homogeneity of the Canadian Corps had exposed Canadian battalions to a longer period of attrition under Haig's strategy, as divisions were not rotated into other formations. Though it provided numerous benefits from an organisational and operational perspective, the time it took to safely relieve corps on the Western Front was considerable. As a result, the Canadian Corps was relatively immobile and when it was rotated into battle, Canadian divisions remained on the frontline for longer periods of time than their British counterparts. This placed extensive pressure on Canadian Corps and precipitated a drafting crisis in November 1916, as they suffered 24,029 casualties, or nearly half their infantry establishment, within seven weeks. Though Hine claims this made British, rather than

¹¹⁰¹ Harris, Paul and Marble, Sanders, 'The 'Step-by-Step' Approach: British Military Thought and Operational Method on the Western Front, 1915-1917', *War in History*, 15:1 (2008), pp. 17-42.

Canadian, corps structure more beneficial from a reinforcement perspective, as it granted more flexibility, she ignores the unnecessary attrition and damage that British and Canadian divisions had to endure under Haig's strategy.¹¹⁰² Despite Haig's failings, the CEF were able to offset some of these difficulties by building up reinforcements in advance of an offensive between 1917 and 1918. Unlike the BEF, the Canadian Corps was supported by a renewed stream of reinforcements, which had been obtained through a rigorous remodelling of Canadian forces in the UK and the late introduction of the conscription in the summer of 1917. By August 1918, the Canadian Corps could amass 6,000 to 8,000 reinforcements in nearby depots, which provided a manpower buffer that could alleviate the problems experienced in 1916.

The cost of attrition had become evident in 1918, when the BEF was forced to reduce and amalgamate 134 battalions between January and March. Though positive reforms were made in reorganising the reinforcement system through the introduction of divisional wings, which increased the speed in which drafts were processed, the German Spring Offensive had thrown the BEF into crisis. It was pushed to the brink of collapse and fell into terminal decline, as the number of reinforcements projected to arrive from the UK diminished. Though Haig, who was rightly concerned about the low number of reinforcements projected for the near future, had decided to revert 14 divisions to cadres, he was convinced by the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, General Ferdinand Foch, to reverse this in May 1918. It was he, and not Haig, who had correctly gauged the need to exploit the Entente's 'moral and material ascendancy' over the depleted German Army, with the maximum amount of force that could be deployed within the short term.

This was not without risk, however, as the BEF had no reserves and a dwindling number of reinforcements available to it, after the last remnants of manpower at home and other theatres were used to reconstitute 13 divisions. Though this, as well as the continuous service of divisions from August 1918, posed a long term risk to the stability of the BEF, Foch's gamble had succeeded. The German Army, which had fallen into a perilous state, was forced into retreat across the entire Western Front. It led to the armistice in November 1918, and enabled the BEF to avoid the projected disbandment of 16 divisions over the winter of 1918

¹¹⁰² Hines, *Refilling Haig's Armies*, pp. 22-23

and 1919. Not only does this demonstrate the cost of Haig's quasi-strategy of attrition, but Foch's influence over British reinforcement policy in the last six months of the Great War.

What this study has demonstrated, however, is that reinforcement policy is far more than the procurement of manpower and the infrastructure and procedures created to organise it. Though Hine touched upon this, her analysis has focused too heavily upon regulations and official policy, and made insufficient use of key archival material.¹¹⁰³ As a result, she fails to recognise that the most successful aspect of the reinforcement system was the integration of medical practices, which were used to 'recycle' large proportions of convalescent veterans back into frontline battalions. The historiography has focused upon the expansion of the medical system as part of the need for 'manpower economy', which evaluated the development of medical infrastructure, procedures, and treatments to provide rapid and effective care.¹¹⁰⁴ Yet, there was also a growth in convalescents infrastructure, which was designed to support and rehabilitate convalescents in both the UK and France. This saw the creation of Command Depots at home, which was supported by sophisticated medical categorisation and TMBs. Despite some issues with the arbitrary methods of TMBs, Command Depots were held in high regard. This included the War Office's expert on manpower, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Lawson, and the Inspector-General of Infantry, Major-General G. A. A. Egerton, who considered their rehabilitative work effective and admirable.¹¹⁰⁵

These developments were mirrored overseas, which saw the rapid expansion of rest centres and convalescent depots, which provided periods of respite and courses of physical 'hardening' to tired and lightly wounded soldiers on the Western Front, respectively. Though a proportion would never become fit for active duty and were, as a result, used alongside womanpower and colonial manpower as substitutes for fit men in rearward services, these

¹¹⁰³ Ibid, pp. 294-299

¹¹⁰⁴ Harrison, Mark, *The Medical War: British Military Medicine in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 16-170; Meyer, Jessica, 'Conserving British Manpower during and after the First World War', in Delaney, Douglas E., Frost, Mark and Brown, Andrew L. (eds), *Manpower and the Armies of the British Empire in the Two World Wars* (London: Cornell University Press, 2021), pp. 43-55.

¹¹⁰⁵ Imperial War Museum (IWM), Report by Inspector-General of Infantry, Major-General G. A. A. Egerton, on London Command Depot, 24th May 1918; TNA, WO32/5093, 'The Personnel employed with the Army in Great Britain, with special reference to a detailed review of particular establishments through the Kingdom', by Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Lawson, 24th October 1918.

reforms had a substantial impact on the frontline. Overall, it is estimated that 25.5 to 25.6 percent of reinforcements received between 1916 and 1918 were recycled convalescents. Considering this is an absolute minimum and as many as two-thirds of recycled reinforcements came from the UK, the total was much larger. It is clear, therefore, that the BEF had become reliant upon rehabilitated veterans to supplement the dwindling flow of recruits from the UK. This reduced the pressure exerted by the growing manpower crisis and ensured frontline battalions retained a semblance of their cohesion, skill and professionalism in the wake of devastating casualties.

Though these measures staved off collapse, this was a clear indicator of what has been coined the medicalisation of war and the militarisation of medicine.¹¹⁰⁶ Doctors and medical services not only had a duty to their patients, but to the army and state to ensure wounded men were quickly recycled back into their battalions. This led to increasingly arbitrary methods to determine if men could serve on the frontline and even the Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Sir Nevil Macready, outlined that the rate at which soldiers were received, rehabilitated, and returned to frontline service, was seen by many as bordering upon 'inhumanity'.¹¹⁰⁷ Despite the individual plight this caused, with many soldiers unduly suffering, the rationalisation of convalescent care mitigated the worst effects of attrition and played a vital role in sustaining the BEF. It demonstrates the immense importance medicine played within the reinforcement system and how the efforts to militarise, centralise, and rationalise medical care, had led to greater manpower efficiency. Above all else, it demonstrates the vital role medical services play in the management of manpower and, more broadly, modern warfare.

This success was not mirrored elsewhere. The primary responsibility of the reinforcement system was to provide reinforcements with the training needed to integrate with their battalions overseas. Whether the various training syllabuses organised by the War Office, estimated to last 12, 14 or 24 weeks, were sufficient to meet the demands of trench warfare, is beyond this analysis. Yet, the four criterion needed to achieve a consistent

¹¹⁰⁶ Carden-Coyne, Ana, *The Politics of Wounds: Military Patients and Medical Power in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Harrison, Mark, 'The Medicalization of War - The Militarization of Medicine', *The Society for the Social History of Medicine*, 9:2 (1996), pp. 267-276.

¹¹⁰⁷ TNA, WO162/28, 'The Position and Prospects of Recruiting' by Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Sir Nevil Macready, 31st May 1917.

turnover of trained personnel, namely the steady supply of raw recruits, the adequate provision of equipment and training infrastructure, a stable corps of trained instructors under competent leadership, and the recognition of reserve battalions as solely training formations, was impossible to achieve due to the chaotic expansion of the British Army between 1914 and 1916. The steady supply of raw recruits was impossible under a voluntary recruitment system, especially as many were periodically diverted to create or expand new formations for overseas service. Even with the advent of conscription, an 'economic and scientific' model of recruit distribution was not forthcoming, as regimental depots arbitrarily distributed men. Whilst this led to units being overrun by, or running out of, recruits on a regular basis, the lack of equipment and training infrastructure undermined any form of adequate training. With equipment prioritised for formations at, or preparing to leave for, the seat of war, reserve units received war material as and when it became available. This disproportionately affected newly created reserve formations, such as the TF's second and third line, as well as the Second and Local Reserves, which lacked modern rifles or any type of machine guns and grenades until the summer of 1916.

Though the creation of the MGC in October 1915 was one practical reform that had substantive benefits, reserve formations struggled to retain the officer and NCO instructors needed to use the limited resources at their disposal. Most were drafted at short notice and despite attempts to rebuild this pool through schools of instruction, it did little to stem the exodus of instructors overseas. This practice was exacerbated by the lack of competent COs to exert a form of quality control over training, as they were predominantly drawn from retired or convalescent officers, as well as those who were 'Stellenbosched' from overseas service. Combined with the difficulty faced by the SR, ER and Territorial second line, who had to provide soldiers for garrisons and other home defence duties, the criticisms aimed at poorly trained drafts were deserved.

The creation of the TR in September 1916 resolved a large number of these problems, though some, such as the unstable cohort of NCO instructors, continued to persist for the remainder of the war. Yet, reserve formations, including Young Soldier and Graduated Battalions, were far more fortunate than their predecessors, which lacked any means to undertake realistic or advanced training. Despite this, the implications of these issues are

evident when surveying reinforcement training on the Western Front. The anxiety felt amongst senior commanders about poorly trained drafts had become palpable in early 1915, and had led to the creation of a standardised test and train procedure that was integrated into the reinforcement system by 1916. Though its impact was limited, as the crux of the problem lay with reinforcement training in the UK, it balanced speed with the need of providing reinforcements with key skills required on the battlefield. It is evident, however, that this system had contributed to the Étaples Mutiny in September 1917. Triggered by the mounting pressure, which had been caused by poor management of 'bread and butter' issues and the Third Battle of Ypres, the harsh training regime for recruits and convalescents alike had amplified these difficulties.

Subsequent changes to this system were not orchestrated by GHQ, but spearheaded by the CEF between 1917 and 1918. Provided scant support by the imperial army, the Canadian Corps, under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Currie, developed their own decentralised model that provided standardised instruction to partially-trained reinforcements from the UK. Its effectiveness was so apparent that GHQ implemented this across the rest of the imperial army, which led to the creation of divisional wings and corps reinforcement camps between September 1917 and January 1918. Though the decentralised culture of the imperial army thwarted any chance of achieving uniformity in training, it represented the cross-pollination of ideas between military formations of the British Empire during the Great War.

Many of the problems discussed can be traced back to a fundamental principle that was never resolved by civil and military authorities; the need to balance the competing demands of expansion and sustainability. This problem had cropped up throughout the South African War and had become a key topic of debate between 1901 and 1914. Though the Haldane reforms had, theoretically, resolved this issue through the creation of the TF and SR, Kitchener's chaotic approach to expansion had destroyed these careful, if somewhat flawed, plans. The New Armies were absolutely essential to the prosecution of the Great War, but little thought was dedicated to how many divisions could be sustained over a protracted period. Though the War Office estimated the need to cover an annual wastage of 1,375,200 in January 1915, which was an overestimation of casualties, they did not take into

consideration how these men could be procured. They failed to consider if this was possible over successive years and whether it could be balanced against the growing demands of industry. As a result, Kitchener continued to demand additional men as he and others, such as the CIGS, Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, increased their manpower liabilities through expansion and the deployment of additional divisions, with the 66th (2nd East Lancashire) Division being the last to proceed overseas in March 1917.¹¹⁰⁸ Even when the War Office could not obtain the requisite manpower it needed to cover wastage, they demanded 110,000 men for new units in December 1917. Though these demands expanded arms that provided mechanised firepower, including heavy artillery brigades and tank battalions, there was no consideration about the broader manpower situation and whether the infantry should be reduced to compensate for this.

Even if a generous approach is adopted, and grants some margin of error to military planners, including Kitchener, who faced unprecedented circumstances from 1914 regarding the organisation of the British Army, these questions were resolved elsewhere. New Zealand mobilised nearly half its male population of military age and ended the war with an estimated surplus of 20,000 reinforcements by November 1918. This can be attributed to the joint decisions made by civil and military authorities to limit the expansion of the NZEF, often against the 'advice' and political pressure of the CIGS. Specifically, to forgo the creation of a second New Zealand Division and to disband the 4th New Zealand Brigade in February 1918, which had been reluctantly created at the behest of Britain. Though New Zealand had fewer civil and military demands to confront, such as the logistical and industrial demands of an imperial army, New Zealand authorities understood that sustainability had to be factored into the equation of war-time expansion. That successive military authorities in Britain refused to consider this and, instead, endlessly called for more men, was a critical failing on their behalf. They refused to acknowledge the situation at home, the impact their demands had, and how an army cannot grow indefinitely throughout a war of attrition. Though the British Army were forced to adapt to the needs of modern warfare, which placed greater emphasis on mechanised firepower, the War Office continued to create new units at the expense of pre-

¹¹⁰⁸ Becke, A. F., *Order of Battle of Divisions, Part 2B: 2nd Line Territorial Force Divisions (57th-69th) with The Home Service Divisions (71st-73rd) and 74th and 75th Divisions* (London: HMSO, 1937), p. 73.

existing formations. Heavy in terms of manpower liability, a large number of infantry divisions were left to wither away as recruits were diverted to these new formations.¹¹⁰⁹

These problems were not solely caused by the War Office, as civil authorities had a critical role to play. Though Kitchener foresaw the need to create and maintain a large army for several years, he and the War Office had reacted to the demands placed upon it by the various governments of the day. This included the expansion of the BEF, the mechanised firepower at its disposal, and the need to deploy military forces across multiple theatres of operation. It was not until December 1917, when the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, had created the Ministry of National Service and the Manpower Committee, that the British Government attempted to tally the cost of these commitments alongside that of civil and industrial demands. Despite the War Office's unruly approach to expansion, the government only took responsibility for their role three years into a total war of attrition. It was their duty to scrutinise military plans, to balance them against civil demands, and to consider if the nation's most important asset, manpower, could sustain it. Due to this, 'The Army Council's claim for more men is fully justified, not on the ground that the Army has not received enough men to maintain it... but on the ground that it has not been expanded sufficiently to enable it to meet the military liabilities which successive governments have from time to time assumed.'¹¹¹⁰ It is clear, therefore, that the question of sustainability, in relation to competing demands and national demographics, must be considered by civil and military authorities in unison. Strategic priorities must be determined in relation to available manpower, and whether the state is able to provide the military means, as recommended by military experts, to adequately achieve them. This is fundamental to the practice of maintaining a modern army in the field and, without congenial civil-military relations, it is impossible to achieve this equilibrium.

Overall, the reinforcement system underwent colossal change between 1914 and 1918 in an attempt to sustain the British Army. It struggled, and at times failed, to overcome the challenges thrown upon it by industrial warfare, including the mistakes made by the War Cabinet, War Office, and GHQ. Yet, it met the most pressing demands of attrition and reserve

¹¹⁰⁹ TNA, NATS1/354, 'Maintenance of the Armed Forces' by Minister of National Service, Sir Auckland Geddes, 22nd May 1918.

¹¹¹⁰ Ibid.

battalions, whose actions have been mostly forgotten, stoically supplied an estimated 2,000,584 reinforcements to the Western Front throughout the Great War.¹¹¹¹ The SR undertook the bulk of this burden and, on average, each battalion trained 667 officers and 17,458 reinforcements for active service. Despite its quick demise after August 1919, once the Cabinet accepted the 10 year rule and assumed no major conflict would arise during this period, its role had been vital. The ability to continuously recruit, train, and draft men had prevented the British Army from collapsing under the weight of its casualties, and gave it the time needed to expand via the TF and New Armies. In spite of the many difficulties that plagued it, the SR and, more broadly, the reinforcement system that evolved from it, enabled the British Army to prosecute a total war of attrition for over four years.¹¹¹²

¹¹¹¹ TNA, WO162/6, Record of Work of Adjutant General's Office.

¹¹¹² Hansard, House of Lords Debate, 10th August 1921, Vol. 43, cc. 388; Beckett, Ian F. W., *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558-1945*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 244-246.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Methodology for data derived from casualty books.

Casualty books are a vital source, as they track all soldiers held on the strength of battalions, from embarkation in the UK till their death, discharge, or departure from the theatre of operations. Whilst many archives claim that their copy is unique, at least four sets of casualty books have survived for the King's (Liverpool Regiment), the Somerset Light Infantry, the Royal Welch Fusiliers and the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.¹¹¹³ None were discovered for New Army battalions, or Scottish and Irish Regiments, which skews the data towards a snapshot of England and Wales. The geographical range for both nations is also limited, as all were drawn from Southern or Western Command. Nevertheless, selection was based upon what casualty books have been discovered to date and, despite these limitations, provide an extraordinarily detailed overview of manpower within battalions. Unlike other records, they list all men who served and, bar a few entries, which was dependent upon the individual making the entry, data was consistently recorded across the board. As a result, this can be used to compare a number of socio-economic themes relating to soldiers, as well as consider the broader military and administrative organisation of the British Army.

The data within these sources has been used to construct three datasets, that were used to thematically evaluate reinforcements and the reinforcement system between 1914 and 1918. The first dataset focused on creating a socio-economic overview of the battalion, whilst the second analysed the composition of drafts, whether a new reinforcement, posted from within, or transferred from outside, the regiment and corps. The last analyses the proportion of recycled reinforcements, who had been wounded and returned to active service, in each draft.

Several parameters were established for the selection and analysis of data. Firstly, it was clear that a like-for-like assessment of each casualty book, where 100 percent of all soldiers were considered, was extremely time consuming and unnecessary from a statistical

¹¹¹³ Buckinghamshire Archives, TA/6/11-14, 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion casualty books, 1915-1918; Liverpool Maritime Museum, King's Regiment Collection, K2/1, 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment) casualty books, 1915-1918; Somerset Archive, Regimental Archive of the Somerset Light Infantry, DD/SLI/9/4, 1st Somerset Light Infantry casualty book, 1914-1918; The Royal Welch Fusiliers Museum, 276, 1st Royal Welch Fusiliers casualty books, 1914-1918.

perspective. Although 10 percent would have been sufficient, a sizable proportion of men within each diary are untraceable, even with the broad range of sources utilised. Secondly, reinforcements were mostly recorded in alphabetical order, which made it difficult to calculate the total sizes of drafts and transfers. Therefore, an alphabetical sample of last names, ranging from A to G, was selected as the basis of this analysis. Numbering 6,560 soldiers, this roughly formed a third of all men sent, or earmarked for, each battalion, and provides a reliable quantitative and representative survey of each battalion.

Where appropriate, each dataset utilised additional sources to improve its range and reliability. As mentioned, the socio-economic dataset attempts to determine the social profile of original members, and subsequent reinforcements, of each battalion for the duration of the war. By using the names, regimental numbers, and date of arrival supplied within each casualty book, research was conducted across a multitude of dataset and sources to determine specifics about their identity. Although military service records provide the best overview of this, as it gave up-to-date information about each man from enlistment, only 40 percent survived the destruction of the Arnside Street repository in September 1940.¹¹¹⁴

Therefore, a variety of traditional and non-traditional sources were consulted to determine the identity of men, including their place of birth and residency. This included the Commonwealth War Graves Commission dataset and the 1891, 1901 and 1911 censuses across England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The 1891 and 1901 censuses were used to track down long-time serviceman or reservists, who had enlisted during the late Victorian and Edwardian period, whilst the 1911 Census provided the bulk of information for war-time recruits. This was somewhat unsatisfactory, as information was at least three years old and there was a risk of mistaking an identity through this method. The *Soldiers Died in the Great War* dataset was used to verify this, but the residency recorded was avoided if unverified through other sources, as it only records where each man enlisted. Though the Army defined this as a recruit's residence, local connections with regiments during the Late Victorian and

¹¹¹⁴ TNA, Records for the First World War', https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/service_records/sr_soldiers.htm [last accessed 17/11/2022].

Edwardian periods were weak across several parts of the country, and it was common for men to travel to different parts of the UK to enlist.¹¹¹⁵

To improve the range and reliability of social data drawn from these traditional sources, supporting datasets through *Find My Past* and TNA were utilised. Amongst others, this included Prisoners of War records, pension claims, the privately commissioned *De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour 1914-1918* and attestation forms for other arms, including the Royal Artillery, Royal Tank Corps and Royal Air Force.¹¹¹⁶ Collectively, this was used to create a robust dataset upon the place of birth and residency of each soldier. This helped to discern any local or regional connections recruits had with regiment, which provided an overview of the changing socio-economic composition of battalions. Only figures for the 1st Royal Welsh Fusiliers and 1/1st Buckinghamshire Battalion in 1918 did not reach the 10 percent threshold needed for statistical viability, and have therefore been excluded. Though this was due to a lack of supporting archival evidence, both units were transferred to the Italian Front in November 1917 and only had a small turnover in manpower.

The second dataset identified the composition of drafts received by battalions on the frontline, and have been categorised as reinforcements, posted, or transferred. Definitions were not always clear, nor were they used consistently across each casualty book. Thus, the following definitions were used. Reinforcements included all recruits and convalescents from UK and France, who, based upon their entry, were likely to come from their regimental reserve. Casualty books did not state the origin of soldiers, but they regularly listed men who were transferred from other regiments upon arrival in France. Based upon this, transfers included recruits and convalescents who were drafted from another regiment or arm whilst in, or on route to, France, whilst posting referred to all soldiers and convalescents posted

¹¹¹⁵ French, David, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People c.1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 44-50; Spiers, Edward M., *The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 126-127.

¹¹¹⁶ Find My Past (FMP), 1891 Census for England, Scotland and Wales; FMP, 1901 Census for England, Scotland and Wales; FMP, 1911 Census for England and Wales; FMP, 1911 Census for Ireland; FMP, British Jewry Book of Honour, 1914-1920; FMP, De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour, 1914-1918; FMP, Deserters and Absentees in the Police Gazette, 1914-1919; FMP, Liverpool Pals, 1914-1918; FMP, Prisoners of War, 1715-1945; FMP, Railwaymen Died in the Great War, 1914-1918; FMP, Royal Artillery Attestations 1883-1942; FMP, Royal Tank Corps Enlistment Records, 1919-1934; FMP, Soldiers Died in the Great War, 1914-1919; TNA, AIR79, Airmen's Records, 1901-1944; TNA, PIN82, Widows' pension forms, 1910-1932; TNA, WO96, Militia attestation forms, 1806-1915; TNA, WO161, Prisoners of war interviews; TNA, WO363, Soldier's service files; TNA, WO364, Soldier's pension claims, 1900-1994.

from another battalion of the same regiment (or corps) in France. Collectively, this was created to determine the number of reinforcements drawn from regimental reserves, and how far the Adjutant General and, by extension, GHQ, distributed reinforcements upon arrival in France.

This interpretation differs from Helen McCartney's analysis of the 1/6th King's (Liverpool Regiment), as she argues most reinforcements were posted from other battalions of the regiment from September 1917. However, this is only due to the method of categorisation within her analysis and the manner data is presented within the casualty book. Although the casualty book states most men were posted from various battalions of the same regiment since 1916, this was a paper trail regarding the movement of soldiers to the frontline. As mentioned in chapter four, soldiers sent overseas were earmarked for one battalion and then incorporated into the broader regiment pool at the IBD. When sent to a different battalion, they were recorded as being posted. McCartney references this to claim most reinforcements came from the regimental reserve, which this research supports. The difference only arises as this study uses a strict definition for posting, which only included soldier's posted from one frontline battalion to another. Thus, both assessments agree that the vast majority of reinforcements came from the same regimental reinforcement pool and not from external transfers.¹¹¹⁷

Two smaller, secondary samples were drawn from these two datasets. The first contained men originally designated for the battalion, who were drafted or transferred elsewhere upon arrival at the infantry base depots. They were recorded separately to gauge the extent of posting and transfers between battalions and regiments. This was not included in the analysis above, but it helped determine the impact of key reforms, including the decision to reorganise IBDs from a divisional to a regimental basis in May 1916. The second considered the number of men discharged for various (non-medical) reasons, which helped to estimate the number of time-expired soldiers who chose to leave the armed forces.

¹¹¹⁷ McCartney, Helen, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 66-70.

The last dataset is the most complicated, as it attempted to calculate the proportion of wounded soldiers that were recycled back into the frontline. This appears straightforward, as casualty books record the route men took through the medical and convalescent system, and notes whether they were returned to their unit or transferred elsewhere, such as support services or the UK. The great difficulty, however, is determining if a soldier was absent on a temporary basis, or has been officially struck off strength. Casualty books themselves do not record when a man was struck off strength until he left the theatre of operations, as they were technically kept on strength for record keeping purposes.

Thus far, only two references have been found in relation to this. The first was drawn from the war diary of First Army, which stated in December 1915 that other ranks can only be struck off strength for the following medical reasons:

‘1: Declared Killed, wounded or missing in battle.

2: Evacuated sick outside of divisional area or evacuated from theatre of operations to England.’¹¹¹⁸

The Second was published by Canadian authorities in 1918 and, as part of the imperial army, can be applied to the BEF as well.¹¹¹⁹ They were:

‘1: Men are struck off effective strength after seven days of sickness.

2: 21 days after declared missing.

3: Day of evacuation to base hospital.’¹¹²⁰

Whilst providing some guidance, it is unclear when the seven day limit was introduced and whether there were any other orders to consider. Secondly, after evaluating over 6,000 entries, it became clear that most men were sent from field ambulances, at the divisional level, to CCS, base hospitals, and convalescent depots, which were organised at various points, under different authorities, across the Lines of Communication. Though many were

¹¹¹⁸ TNA, WO95/181, First Army Adjutant Quartermaster General war diary, December 1915.

¹¹¹⁹ Delaney, Douglas, *The Imperial Army Project: Britain and the Land Forces of the Dominions and India, 1902-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹¹²⁰ Holt, Richard, *Filling the Ranks: Manpower in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017), pp. 178-181.

returned within a 48 hour period, and had been evacuated to rearward position to free up beds for the severely wounded, countless soldiers would have been considered recycled reinforcements under the strict Canadian definition. If the data was recorded as such, the number would have been astronomically high. It would have completely skewed the data towards a conclusion that the majority of soldiers were recycled reinforcements.

Therefore, the definitions proposed for evaluating the return of wounded soldiers are based upon the route they took. If a man was wounded and returned to his or another battalion via an IBD, he was considered a recycled reinforcement. As explained in chapter five, the IBD was the lynchpin of the reinforcement system on the Western Front, as it connected the rearward medical services to the reinforcement systems on the Western Front and the UK. It was also here that they were returned to their unit, or posted and transferred elsewhere, as they were under the authority of 3rd Echelon. Conversely, if a soldier was in the medical system, anywhere between field ambulances to base hospitals, and was simply discharged to his battalion, it can be presumed they were kept on strength. Therefore, they were not a recycled reinforcement, but a soldier on temporary leave due to sickness or wounds.

The number recorded, however, should be seen as a very conservative estimate. Firstly, it is impossible to ascertain if soldiers coming from the UK were fresh recruits or recycled reinforcements, unless their service records survive or they had already served in the battalion. Therefore, it was entirely possible for someone to be wounded, returned to the UK, and seemingly drafted as a fresh recruit to a new battalion or regiment. Secondly, men who did not return via an IBD were excluded. Though some had been travelling across the medical system for several week, even months at a time, they were recording as returning straight to their units. This was likely due to administrative error or anomalies within the record keeping process, but without additional archival sources, it was impossible to verify their status.

Collectively, this methodology has established a series of parameters to assess the wealth of information contained within casualty books. It guided the socio-economic analysis of reinforcements, which provided the means to examine the impact of reinforcement policy, and enabled a compressive evaluation upon the proportion of soldiers that were posted or

transferred on the Western Front. Most importantly, it determined, for the first time, the proportion of wounded soldiers that were recycled back into the frontline.

Appendix 2: Statistical breakdown of the Army Reserve for the Foot Guards and Line Infantry, 1903-1913.¹¹²¹

	Effect Strength of Reserve for Line infantry, 1 st October					Effect Strength of Reserve for Foot Guards, 1 st October				
Year	A	B	D	Total:	Increase/ Decrease	A	B	D	Total:	Increase/ Decrease
1903-1904	1,790	37,203	6,890	45,883		146	5,683	452	6,281	
1904-1905	3,100	45,504	10,665	59,269	13,386	210	6,054	610	6,874	593
1905-1906	2,607	53,855	13,464	69,926	10,657	229	6,521	738	7,488	614
1906-1907	3,122	65,211	11,756	80,089	10,163	219	7,062	662	7,943	455
1907-1908	3,772	65,905	12,529	82,206	2,117	244	7,554	625	8,423	480
1908-1909	3,804	63,254	8,860	75,918	-6,288	247	7,744	748	8,739	316
1909-1910	3,811	60,339	10,153	74,303	-1,615	250	7,357	931	8,538	-201
1910-1911	3,904	57,990	13,826	75,720	1,417	250	7,252	1,203	8,705	167
1911-1912	3,972	56,064	16,233	76,269	549	245	7,028	1,473	8,746	41
1912-1913	3,984	55,551	21,816	81,351	5,082	250	6,959	1,566	8,775	29

¹¹²¹ Compiled from; 1906 (Cd. 2693), *General Annual Report of the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1905, with abstracts for previous years*, p.109; 1908 (Cd. 3798) *The General Annual Report on the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1907*, p. 101; 1910 (Cd. 5016) *The General Annual Report on the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1909*, p.98; 1912 (Cd. 6065) *The General Annual Report on the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1911*, p. 98; 1914 (Cd. 7252) *The General Annual Report on the British Army for the year ending 30th September 1913*, p. 102.

**Appendix 3: Occupational breakdown of the South-West region, containing the counties of
Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire.¹¹²²**

Occupation Category	Cornwall	Devon	Dorset	Gloucestershire	Somerset	Wiltshire
General and Local Government	2,216	6,511	1,904	5,761	3,341	2,106
Defence	2,709	26,913	9,096	1,032	745	4,025
Professional Occupations	5,937	15,352	4,830	16,245	10,753	5,214
Domestic offices and services	18,885	55,198	18,825	49,305	38,636	19,942
Commercial	2,662	8,493	2,161	16,184	5,894	2,499
Transport	9,472	22,640	6,881	31,157	13,638	9,023
Agriculture	28,075	47,664	19,160	27,640	36,335	26,557
Fishing	3,491	1,725	270	129	48	0
Mines and Quarries	14,339	3,222	1,948	11,644	8,181	1,190
Metals, machines, implements and conveyance	6,264	17,251	3,440	21,167	7,636	14,257
Precious Metals/Jewels	460	1,554	285	1,744	853	305
Construction	8,596	21,020	7,334	19,608	14,315	7,876

¹¹²² 1913 (Cd. 7018) Census of England and Wales, 1911: Occupations and Industries, Part I, pp. 147-150, 160-167, 178-182, 260-263, 292-296.

Wood, Furniture, Fittings and Decorations	1,060	4,423	1,285	7,949	3,560	1,683
Brick, cement, pottery and glass	201	1,325	1,157	1,884	1,495	256
Chemicals, etc.	1,051	1,507	210	4,214	767	1,151
Skins, leathers, hair and feathers	382	1,598	283	2,201	1,454	927
Paper, prints, books and stationary	763	4,357	742	11,153	3,742	871
Textiles	2,393	7,654	2,374	9,231	7,251	3,213
Dress	8,713	22,977	5,489	36,541	21,989	7,485
Food, Tobacco, Drink and Lodging	10,590	26,177	8,525	37,903	17,693	9,721
Gas, water and electricity	360	1,384	508	1,935	874	507
Other and undefined	6,566	16,137	4,873	15,313	8,222	5,279
Total Work Pop	135,185	315,083	101,580	329,940	207,422	124,087

Appendix 4: Battalions disbanded or amalgamated during the reorganisation of the BEF, January-March 1918.¹¹²³

Regiment and battalion	Outcome.¹¹²⁴	Details.¹¹²⁵
3/4 th Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment)	D	personnel to 1 st , 6 th , 7 th and 8 th Battalions.
8 th Buffs (East Kent Regiment)	D	Personnel to 1 st and 6 th Battalions.
7 th King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment)	D	Personnel to 1/4 th , 1/5 th and 6 th Entrenching Battalions.
11 th King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment)	D	Personnel to 6 th Entrenching Battalions.
16 th Northumberland Fusiliers	D	Personnel to TF Battalions in 50 th (Northumbrian) Division.
20 th Northumberland Fusiliers	D	
21 st Northumberland Fusiliers	D	
24 th /27 th Northumberland Fusiliers	D	
26 th Northumberland Fusiliers	D	
2/5 th Royal Warwickshire Regiment	D	Personnel to 2/6 th and 24 th Entrenching Battalions.
2/8 th Royal Warwickshire Regiment	D	Personnel to 2/7 th and 25 th Entrenching Battalions.
11 th Royal Warwickshire Regiment	D	
8 th Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment)	D	
12 th Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment)	D	Personnel to 1 st , 10 th and 11 th Battalions.
20 th Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment)	D	
22 nd Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment)	D	
32 nd Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment)	D	
2/5 th King's (Liverpool Regiment)	D	Personnel to 2/6 th , 2/7 th , 11 th and 12 th Battalions.
2/8 th King's (Liverpool Regiment)	A	Absorbed by 1/8 th Battalion.
2/9 th King's (Liverpool Regiment)	A	Absorbed by 1/9 th Battalion.
20 th King's (Liverpool Regiment)	D	

¹¹²³ TNA, WO95/2362, 18th West Yorkshire Regiment war diary, February 1918; James, E. A., *British Regiments, 1914-1918* (London: Samson Books, 1978), pp. 42-118

¹¹²⁴ Note: A: Amalgamated; D: Disbanded.

¹¹²⁵ Unless specified, men posted to battalions of the same regiment.

8 th Norfolk Regiment	D	15 Officers and 300 men to 9 th Battalions, 5 Officers and 100 men to 7 th Battalion.
2/4 th Lincolnshire Regiment	A	Absorbed by 1/4 th Battalion.
8 th Suffolk Regiment	D	Personnel to 2 nd , 4 th and 7 th Battalions.
9 th Suffolk Regiment	D	
2/6 th Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment)	D	
2/8 th Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment)	A	Absorbed by 1/8 th Battalion.
12 th Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment)	D	Formed (with 8th East Yorkshire Regiment) 10 th Entrenching Battalion.
16 th Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment)	D	
18 th Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment)	D	Personnel to 1 st , 2 nd , 1/5 th , 1/6 th , 1/7 th , 8 th , 9 th , 10 th and 15 th battalions.
8 th East Yorkshire Regiment	D	Formed (with 12 th Prince of Wales Own (West Yorkshire Regiment) 10 th Entrenching Battalion.
12 th East Yorkshire Regiment	D	
13 th East Yorkshire Regiment	D	
2/5 th Bedfordshire Regiment	D	
8 th Bedfordshire Regiment	D	
2/5 th Leicestershire Regiment	D	
9 th Leicestershire Regiment	D	Personnel to 6 th , 7 th , 8 th and 11 th Battalions.
6 th Royal Irish Regiment	D	Personnel to 2 nd and 7 th Battalions.
7 th Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own (Yorkshire Regiment)	D	Personnel to 6 th , 12 th and 13 th Battalions.
10 th Alexandra, Princess of Wales's Own (Yorkshire Regiment)	D	Personnel to 2 nd , 1/4 th and 1/5 th Battalions.
2/6 th Lancashire Fusiliers	A	Absorbed by 1/6 th Battalion.
3/5 th Lancashire Fusiliers	D	
9 th Lancashire Fusiliers	D	
20 th Lancashire Fusiliers	D	
13 th Cheshire Regiment	D	
16 th Cheshire Regiment	D	
10 th Royal Welsh Fusiliers	D	
15 th Royal Welsh Fusiliers	D	

19 th Royal Welsh Fusiliers	D	
11 th South Wales Borderers	D	
12 th South Wales Borderers	D	
10 th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers	D	7 officers and 150 men to 2 nd Battalion.
11 th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers	D	20 officers and 400 men to 9 th Battalion.
2/4 th Gloucestershire Regiment	D	
2/6 th Gloucestershire Regiment	D	
10 th Gloucestershire Regiment	D	Personnel to 13 th Entrenching Battalion.
14 th Gloucestershire Regiment	D	12 officers and 250 men to 13 th Battalion.
2/7 th Worcestershire Regiment	D	Personnel to 2/8 th and 10 th Battalions.
2/4 th East Lancashire Regiment	A	Absorbed by 1/4 th Battalion.
7 th East Lancashire Regiment	D	
8 th East Lancashire Regiment	D	20 officers and 400 men to 11 th Battalion.
7 th East Surrey Regiment	D	
6 th Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry	D	
2/5 th Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)	A	Absorbed by 1/5 th Battalion.
2/6 th Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)	D	
8 th Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment)	D	
6 th Border Regiment	D	
12 th Royal Sussex Regiment	D	
14 th Hampshire Regiment	D	
2/5 th South Staffordshire Regiment	D	
8 th South Staffordshire Regiment	D	Personnel to 2/6 th , 7 th and 7 th Entrenching Battalions.
2/5 th Prince of Wales's Volunteers (South Lancashire Regiment)	D	
7 th Prince of Wales's Volunteers (South Lancashire Regiment)	D	
8 th Prince of Wales's Volunteers (South Lancashire Regiment)	D	
10 th Welsh Regiment	D	
16 th Welsh Regiment	D	

17 th Welsh Regiment	D	
6 th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry	D	Personnel to 2/4 th , 5 th and 14 th Entrenching Battalions.
2/1 st Buckinghamshire Battalion	D	Personnel to 25 th Entrenching Battalion.
13 th Essex Regiment	D	
2/7 th Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment)	A	Absorbed by 1/7 th battalion.
2/8 th Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment)	D	
17 th Sherwood Foresters (Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment)	D	
4/5 th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment	A	Absorbed by 1/5 th Battalion.
7 th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment	D	
8 th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment	D	
10 th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment	D	
6 th Royal Berkshire Regiment	D	Personnel to 1 st , 2 nd and 5 th Battalions.
3/4 th Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment)	D	
11 th Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment)	D	
2/5 th King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry)	A	Absorbed by 1/5 th Battalion.
6 th King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry)	D	
7 th King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry)	D	
10 th King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry)	D	
5 th King's (Shropshire Light Infantry)	D	Personnel to 1 st , 1/4 th , 4 th and 7 th Battalions.
3/10 th Middlesex Regiment	D	
11 th Middlesex Regiment	D	
12 th Middlesex Regiment	D	
16 th Middlesex Regiment	D	
17 th Middlesex Regiment	D	
10 th King's Royal Rifle Corps	D	
21 st King's Royal Rifle Corps	D	
2/8 th Manchester Regiment	D	
2/9 th Manchester Regiment	A	Absorbed by 1/9 th Battalion.

2/10 th Manchester Regiment	D	
18 th Manchester Regiment	D	
19 th Manchester Regiment	D	
23 rd Manchester Regiment	D	
2/5 th North Staffordshire Regiment	A	Absorbed by 1/5 th Battalion.
2/5 th York and Lancaster Regiment	D	
10 th York and Lancaster Regiment	D	
12 th York and Lancaster Regiment	D	
14 th York and Lancaster Regiment	D	
10 th Durham Light Infantry	D	
14 th Durham Light Infantry	D	
17 th Highland Light Infantry	D	
8/9 th Royal Irish Rifles	D	
10 th Royal Irish Rifles	D	
11 th /13 th Royal Irish Rifles	D	
14 th Royal Irish Rifles	D	
7/8 th Princess Victoria's (Royal Irish Fusiliers)	D	
7 th Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians)	D	Personnel to 2 nd and 19 th Entrenching Battalions.
8/9 th Royal Dublin Fusiliers	D	Personnel to 1 st and 2 nd Battalions.
10 th Royal Dublin Fusiliers	D	
10 th Rifle Brigade	D	Personnel to 3 rd , 11 th , 12 th and 13 rd Battalions.
3/1 st London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers)	D	Personnel to 1/4 th , 2/2 nd , 2/3 rd and 2/4 th Battalions.
3/3 rd London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers)	A	Absorbed by 1/3 rd Battalion.
2/5 th London Regiment (London Rifle Brigade)	D	
2/6 th London Regiment (Rifles)	A	Absorbed by 1/6 th Battalion.
2/7 th London Regiment (City of London)	A	Absorbed by 1/7 th Battalion.
2/8 th London Regiment (Post Office Rifles)	A	Absorbed by 1/8 th Battalion.
2/9 th London Regiment (Queen Victoria's Rifles)	A	Absorbed by 1/9 th Battalion.

2/11 th London Regiment (Finsbury Rifles)	D	
2/12 th London Regiment (The Rangers)	A	Absorbed by 1/12 th Battalion.

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